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# THE ATONEMENT

*THE DALE LECTURES*  
*for 1933*

By

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*Vexilla Regis prodeunt,  
Fulget Crucis mysterium.*

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THIS BOOK  
IS DEDICATED TO  
MY WIFE





## PREFACE

THE following lectures were given at Mansfield College, Oxford, under the Dale Trust, in Michaelmas Term, 1933: they are printed here practically as they were delivered. One or two slight modifications have been made in view of criticisms and suggestions received at the time of delivery.

The lectures are to be regarded as a sequel to my *History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ* (1918), to which a general reference may be given for the historical statements contained in the present work and for their documentation. The *History* was preceded by a smaller treatise, *The New Testament Doctrines of Man, Sin, and Salvation* (1908), which may serve to justify the brief summaries of Biblical doctrines in Lectures II and III.

The general theological position from which I work in the Lectures is that of a religious experience metaphysically justified. This dual reference to religious experience and to metaphysic is not very usual at the present time, though it has great representatives in the past history of theology, among whom I may name particularly Alexander of Hales, Schleiermacher, and C. H. Weisse. It may help to the understanding of my position to explain how I came to it.

Brought up in the older evangelicalism, supported as it was by the doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible, I experienced as a theological student the full force of

modern Biblical criticism, and had to cast about for a fresh foundation and new statement of the Christian faith. At this stage two books came into my hands, Ritschl's *Justification and Reconciliation*, and Harnack's *History of Dogma*. Mutually supporting each other, together they came to me as a revelation, only describable in the language of a famous sonnet of Keats:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken.

I accepted the Ritschlian theology *ex animo*, as it was propounded by the master and illustrated by the disciple; and I rejoiced in my new-found freedom from the vexing problems of historical criticism, and my ability to move easily and naturally in the intelligent use of the different parts of the Bible. I found in Ritschl's *Justification and Reconciliation* the key to Holy Scripture, which Calvin's *Institutes* had been to my evangelical forefathers. Ritschl showed the way to be honest in criticism, and yet retain the evangelical outlook. As a young minister, I found the Ritschlian theology a theology that could be preached. I still think that Ritschl's great work is the most useful key to the Scriptures for the Christian ministry.

For a time also, after I became a teacher of theology, I was still well satisfied with Ritschlianism, and taught it positively with complete assurance. I was 'awakened from my dogmatic slumbers' by reading a work of Troeltsch on Reason and Revelation, which left a profound impression on me.<sup>1</sup> Troeltsch made me realize

<sup>1</sup> *Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Johann Gerhardt und Melanchthon*, 1891.

the unsatisfactoriness of all merely experiential theology without an adequate metaphysical basis, and I became dissatisfied with the Ritschlian separation of Theology and Metaphysics: I now saw that it ended in a new Biblical theology inadequately related to the rest of knowledge. Troeltsch drove me back to Schleiermacher, and to the philosophical works with which he supported the experiential theology of his masterpiece, *The Christian Faith*.

This was not the end of my indebtedness to Troeltsch. A reference appended by him to an essay on the essential nature of religion<sup>1</sup> introduced me to the great, but forgotten, speculative theologian, C. H. Weisse, and his monumental *Philosophy of Christianity*.<sup>2</sup> Weisse follows the experiential tradition of Schleiermacher; while metaphysically he leans not only on his master, Hegel, but also on the great theologians of the Middle Ages. The fundamental motive of Weisse's theology is to show the unity of Christianity with reason largely understood.

The last important influence came from Karl Heim. I found his theology sympathetic because its fundamental concern was with the unification of metaphysic and religion. But it was especially his reference back to the medieval schoolmen that helped me:<sup>3</sup> I was made to realize the value of the philosophical prolegomena to theology in the great Summae and Commentaries on the Sentences. Above all, through Karl Heim, I came to

<sup>1</sup> *Wesen der Religion und der Religionswissenschaft*, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophische Dogmatik oder Philosophie des Christenthums*, 1855-62.

<sup>3</sup> Karl Heim, *Das Gewissheitsproblem in der systematischen Theologie bis zu Schleiermacher*, 1911.

know Alexander of Hales, the true progenitor of the type of theology for which I stand.

The lectures will show that I have not 'gone forward' beyond Troeltsch and Heim with the Barthian school now apparently dominant in Germany. In spite of its undoubted earnestness, I can only regard the Barthian theology as altogether unsatisfactory. My reasons for this conclusion are abundantly stated in the lectures.

A reference to some preliminary studies, which have marked the development just described, may help to mitigate one particular difficulty, which arises from the treatment of the doctrine of the Atonement on the basis of a metaphysic of religion. That method has produced a work which exhibits the principal outlines of a systematic theology, but lacks the completeness necessary to a system proper. The studies just mentioned serve to fill out the outline given in the lectures at important points, though even the additions they contain do not round out the lectures to systematic entirety. The following essays may be named:

1. 'The present relations between Philosophy and Theology' in the Symposium, 'The Future of Christianity', 1927.
2. 'Towards a Metaphysic of Religion' (*Congregational Quarterly*, October, 1927).
3. 'The Metaphysical Justification of Religion' (London University Lectures), 1929.
4. 'The Fullness of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit' (*Congregational Quarterly*, October, 1929).

5. 'The Person of Christ in the Light of Modern Scholarship' (*Congregational Quarterly*, January, 1932).
6. 'The Interpretation of Holy Scripture in the Theological System of Alexander of Hales', in the Symposium, 'Amicitiae Corolla', 1933.

It may help the reader, if I add that the essence of my doctrine of the Atonement is contained in Lecture VII. But the support of the other seven lectures is required. If Lecture VII is the keystone of my doctrinal arch, no keystone can duly perform its function unless other stones are ready placed for it to lock together. While it binds them into unity, they support it.

It seems desirable to explain my position towards the two most important English works of recent years on the Atonement. The lectures sufficiently define that position; but it may be well to express it in so many words.

The late Dean Rashdall's Bampton Lectures, *The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology*,<sup>1</sup> defend the Abelardian doctrine, as I do. But their metaphysical basis is different. Dr. Rashdall holds that God suffers, which I am unable to do. Moreover, his treatise contains too much history and too little construction: only one lecture out of eight is devoted to the latter, which is surely inadequate. Even the historical treatment of the subject is open to criticism. A great deal of space is devoted to the New Testament and the Patristic theology;

<sup>1</sup> Oxford, 1919.

but these, even when taken together, represent the less developed forms of the doctrine of the Atonement. The fully developed theories of medieval scholasticism and of Protestantism get very scant justice at Dr. Rashdall's hands. But, so far as a doctrinal construction is to be defended from history, the history must be told in due proportion. The want of balance between construction and history and in the history itself is a serious defect in the *Idea of the Atonement*. It makes me unable to accept Dr. Rashdall's treatise as a satisfactory defence of Abelardianism; so that there is still room for a book that defends that great theory of the Atonement in a different way.

*The Fullness of Sacrifice*,<sup>1</sup> by the present Bishop of Lincoln, differs from my work by having as its primary interest, not the deduction of the doctrine of the Atonement from the metaphysic of religion, but the connexion of it with a 'Catholic' doctrine of the Eucharist. Apart from this general difference, there is actual opposition between Dr. Hicks and myself on two important points.

1. In the interpretation of sacrifice he follows principally Robertson Smith. It is maintained that the death of the victim has simply the purpose of liberating its life for the purpose of bringing about communion between God and men. The conveyance of the sacrificial blood to God by sprinkling the altar, and the offering of the flesh to Him by burning, establish communion between Him and the offerer in the one direction: the eating of the communion meal establishes it in the other direction.

<sup>1</sup> London, 1930.

God and the worshipper are thus bound together in a common life. Dr. Hicks asserts that this meaning holds for both the Old and New Testaments and also for the Patristic theology; but has been lost by Medieval Scholasticism and Protestantism with dire results.

It is altogether doubtful whether so complete a *rationale* of sacrifice can be established as the Bishop supposes. Many sound scholars would say that in New Testament times, at any rate, the principal thought connected with sacrifice was simply that it was the appointed way of communion with God. Other ideas connected with it were simply of private provenance and varied from one person to another. Further, the recent authoritative work of Dr. Buchanan Gray on Old Testament Sacrifice<sup>1</sup> tends to the conclusion that, so far as there were generally accepted notions in Judaism about the meaning of sacrifice, these were not along the lines of Robertson Smith's communion theory, but rather along those of the gift theory, which both he, and the Bishop following him, treat as secondary. It is equally impossible to interpret the New Testament or the Patristic idea of Our Lord's sacrifice simply or mainly along the lines of the communion theory.

2. Dr. Hicks connects the sacrificial ritual with the *numinous* element in the Old Testament: I do the same. But we value the contrast between the numinous or priestly and the prophetic or ethical element in religion altogether differently. The Bishop stands for a scholarship with

<sup>1</sup> *Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1925.

'Catholic' presuppositions; I for one that is consciously and convincingly Protestant. The question here is that of the true meaning of Christianity as a whole. My difference from Dr. Hicks is not one of method, as in the case of Dr. Rashdall, with whom I am in general agreement on the main point of doctrine as to the Atonement. What I have to do then is to offer my lectures as a proof of an altogether different theory of the Atonement from that set out in *The Fullness of Sacrifice*, and to point out the connexion of that theory with the modern Protestant view of the Christian religion, which is also defended in the lectures.

There is, however, one thing that can be said usefully here: it has to do with the final conclusion which Dr. Hicks draws from his premises. This is that in the Atonement, Christ as Priest offers up to God the life that has been liberated by His death, while the Church joins in the offering by the celebration of the Eucharist: in the Communion Christians are fed with this life of Christ, which is now a life in the Spirit. From a Protestant point of view, of course, it is an inadmissible idea that the Eucharist is a presentation of Christ's sacrifice to God: we have rather to say that His sacrifice is presented to us under the figures of the broken bread and out-poured wine, in order to kindle in us faith, hope, and love. But that is not the main criticism to be passed on such a theory of the Atonement as that of Dr. Hicks. The really unsatisfactory thing is the use of a *biological* instead of a moral conception, as the primary category by which



to explain the Atonement. As I said in a review of *The Fullness of Sacrifice*, when it first appeared: 'Not life, but love, is the supreme word in Christianity. Life is what all religions offer: the peculiarity of Christianity is that it interprets life through love.'<sup>1</sup>

I may refer the reader to this review for a criticism of *The Fullness of Sacrifice* which goes farther into detail. By the kindness of the Editor of the *Congregational Quarterly* I have already utilized some of it in the preceding paragraphs.

In conclusion, I am indebted for some useful suggestions and criticisms to Dr. J. V. Bartlet and Dr. C. J. Cadoux, both of Mansfield College; also for some valuable assistance with the Biblical work to Dr. T. W. Manson of the same college. My thanks are also due for much help throughout to my son, O. S. Franks, Fellow of The Queen's College, Oxford. I ought, however, to add that no one but myself is finally responsible for any of the statements or arguments in the text.

ROBERT S. FRANKS.

February 7th, 1934.

<sup>1</sup> *Congregational Quarterly*, October, 1930.



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# LECTURE I

## THE EXPERIENTIAL DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT AND ITS PROOF

I COUNT it a great honour to have been invited to give the Dale Lectures at Mansfield College, the College which Dr. Dale was so instrumental in founding. I can think of no more fitting tribute to his memory than that the subject of the lectures should be the Atonement.

Half a century ago Dale was the leading Congregationalist theologian in this country. Of all his theological works the most famous is his book on the Atonement: no other of his writings has had so great or so permanent an influence. Dale's *Atonement* was, I believe, the first solid piece of theology I ever read; and it helped to fix in me an interest which was already present from my evangelical bringing up, a peculiar interest in the doctrine of the Atonement above all other Christian doctrines. If that interest has led me to conclusions very different from those of Dale, that is still no reason why I should not invoke his memory in beginning my course of lectures. A prophet is not best revered by building his tomb; nor is a theologian most truly honoured by repeating his doctrine like a sacred spell. Theology is a progressive science: its business is perpetually to interpret the Christian gospel anew according to the needs of the time and the best insight we possess. A great deal has happened since Dr. Dale wrote his book, which has materially

affected the theological outlook: this is especially true in regard of our understanding of the Bible and of the history of Christian doctrine, where enormous developments have taken place. It is in view of these changes that I am attempting to restate the doctrine of the Atonement.

Prolonged meditation on the subject has led me to the conclusion that the explanation of the Atonement which goes to the very heart of the matter is the theory associated with the name of the great medieval schoolman, Peter Abelard. It is the doctrine that Christ reconciles men to God by revealing the love of God in His life and still more in His death, so bringing them to trust and love Him in return.

The profound thought here expressed is of course much older than Abelard. It starts from the sublime words of St. Paul: 'God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us'.<sup>1</sup> It is concentrated into the wonderful Johannine aphorism: 'We love, because He first loved us.'<sup>2</sup> It is developed in the noble sentences of St. Augustine: 'If it was difficult for us to love God Himself, at least it ought not to be difficult for us to love Him in return, when He first loved us, and spared not His own Son, but gave Him up for us all. For there is no greater invitation to love than to be first in loving.'<sup>3</sup>

What Abelard did was to single out this doctrine from among other concurrent theories, and set it out in an

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 19.

<sup>3</sup> *De catechizandis rudibus*, 4. 7.

absolute way as the one sufficient explanation of our redemption through Christ. He puts it in sharp opposition to the view of Christ's death as a ransom-price and writes as follows:

'How cruel and unjust it appears that anyone should have demanded the blood of the innocent as any kind of ransom, or have been in any way delighted with the death of the innocent, let alone that God should have found the death of His Son so acceptable, that through it He should have been reconciled to the whole world.'<sup>1</sup>

'It seems to us, however, that we are justified by the blood of Christ and reconciled to God in the following way. His Son took our nature and persevered in instructing us both in word and deed even unto death. This was the singular grace shown us, through which He more abundantly bound us to Himself by love; so that, set on fire as we are by so great a benefit from the Divine grace, true charity should fear nothing at all.'<sup>2</sup>

'And so our redemption is that supreme love manifested in our case by the passion of Christ, which not only delivers us from the bondage of sin, but also acquires for us the liberty of the sons of God; so that we may fulfil all things from the love rather than from the fear of Him, who, as He Himself bears witness, showed us grace so great that no greater can be found. No man, says He, has greater love than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.'<sup>3</sup>

Such is the doctrine of Abelard, which is commonly called the moral theory of the Atonement; though not justly, since it is even more a religious theory than a moral

<sup>1</sup> Migne's *Patrologia*, tom. clxxviii, col. 835.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 836.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

theory. It has to do primarily with the Divine grace, if it has to do also secondarily with man's moral freedom. This theory is also very unfairly labelled subjective, because it involves the subjectivity of the human response to the Divine love: it is in truth fundamentally objective, inasmuch as God, Christ, His Cross, and the Divine love are all the objects of human trust and responsive love. It would be more correct to speak of the *experiential* theory; since the term experience implies both object and subject and the relation between them. I shall use this name henceforward. Theology cannot afford to allow names that beg the question. Just as a Protestant has the right to vindicate his claim to the name of Catholic, so the Abelardian has the right to refuse to have his theory written off as subjective.

There is no doubt that the Abelardian doctrine of the Atonement awakens doubt, distrust, and opposition in many minds. No one of course takes exception to the experiential view of the Atonement as it is presented along with other views by St. Paul, St. John, or St. Augustine. It is the Abelardian tendency to signalize this view as in itself sufficient that has evoked the liveliest opposition, from St. Bernard onward to the present day: we must recognize the presence of this tendency in Abelard, even if sometimes he says things inconsistent with it, and never worked out a complete system of theology from this basis.<sup>1</sup>

What is common to all the opponents of Abelard, old

<sup>1</sup> Franks, *A History of the Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, vol. i, pp. 189 ff.



and new, is the idea that his doctrine is meagre and inadequate. It is not wrong, they say; but it carries us so short a way. They seem to regard the revelation of God's love in Christ as almost too obvious to need discussion. The real questions of a doctrine of the Atonement are held to lie elsewhere: they are great questions about the fulfilment of the moral law, the punishment of sin, the possibility of forgiveness, and so on. They are in fact the questions with which Dale's *Atonement* is concerned. It is said by Dr. Dale and others that the Bible is tremendously concerned about these things; and, if we are not, it means that we have lost touch with Biblical religion. Appeal is also made to the treasures of Christian hymnology and devotion, to the various liturgies of the Church, and to its great Confessions, not to mention the monumental works of such theologians as have either opposed or ignored the Abelardian doctrine.

The importance of the questions named is not to be overlooked: nor is it to be denied that the discussion of them begins in the Bible, and has perpetually interested the Church. The development of theology takes us out into all sorts of inquiries, historical, ethical, and metaphysical, which have an important bearing upon the Atonement. All these things are matters of great moment. I was myself greatly troubled with these problems for many years. The best insight I could attain led me more and more to the experiential theory of the Atonement. But doubt of its adequacy would not be silenced. Was not the New Testament against it, as Dr. Dale says?

Could it really cope successfully with all the issues of human salvation through Christ? These were real difficulties.

Light came from a most unexpected quarter, from that other great schoolman, Abelard's older contemporary, St. Anselm of Canterbury, who maintains a theory almost diametrically opposed to that of Abelard. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*. I found in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* the idea of a central point of view in theology from which its different problems are seen in their due proportion. It occurred to me that by utilizing the method of Anselm, the proof of the Abelardian theory, hitherto lacking to me, might become possible. As an example of method in Christian thinking the *Cur Deus Homo* has never been surpassed.

The project of restatement which I have in mind may be described very simply as an attempt to combine the insight of Abelard with the method of Anselm, or to justify the experiential theory of the Atonement by such a discussion of the various problems of the subject as is contained in the *Cur Deus Homo*. The weakness of so many expositions of the Abelardian doctrine is that they are so satisfied with the original insight that they do not trouble to illuminate the circumferential problems. It is the weakness of Abelard himself: the best way to remedy it seems to me to be a study of Anselm.

Since the *Cur Deus Homo* is to be our guide, our first duty must be to comprehend its argument. We shall then see how the Anselmic method is to be used in the service

of the Abelardian theory. If we can get the Anselmic lion to lie down with the Abelardian lamb, we shall be well on the way to the theological millennium. The book was written to solve the cardinal Christian question of the Incarnation: in a word, to explain (as Anselm says), 'By what reason or necessity God was made man and by His death, as we believe and confess, restored life to the world'.<sup>1</sup>

Anselm envisaged his problem as one of authority and reason. On the one hand the Christian faith had come down to him in the Scriptures, the Creeds, and the writings of the Fathers, amongst whom he specially venerated St. Augustine. On the other hand his mind had been sharpened by the study of the Aristotelian logic which was the general discipline of the Middle Ages. The result was to make him look with a critical eye on the traditional forms of doctrine.

Four different explanations of the Incarnation, all taken from St. Augustine, are criticized in the *Cur Deus Homo*.

1. The first is the doctrine of recapitulation which ultimately goes back to Irenaeus. The purpose of the Incarnation is explained as the undoing of Adam's sin. Stress is laid on the correspondence between the mode of the sin and the mode of the deliverance. Sin came through a woman and a tree; Christ was born of a woman and died on a tree. The criticism of this theory is that it is mere fancy: such analogies are no better than pictures painted on air, unless some basis of reason can be shown.

<sup>1</sup> Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, i. 1.

## THE EXPERIENTIAL DOCTRINE OF THE

2. The second explanation of the Incarnation is the doctrine of redemption from the devil: this theory also goes back to Irenaeus. It was said that Christ by His death had paid a price to the devil to redeem the captives whom he had acquired through Adam's sin. The objection to this view is that the devil, who is himself subject to God, can have acquired no rights against God by tempting man, his fellow slave, to sin. It is unreasonable that God should treat with the devil.

3. The third explanation rejected by Anselm is precisely the experiential theory so soon afterwards championed by Abelard; but which, as we have seen, was already to be found in Augustine. It is the doctrine that Christ died to show the love of God to man. This theory too is found insufficient: why should Christ have been compelled to show his love in this particular way? Some cogent reason for the requirement must be demonstrated.

4. The last doctrine criticized is that Christ died, just because God so willed it. Augustine sometimes treats this as the final point beyond which we cannot go in the matter of explanation. This view also is found faulty: we cannot believe that God wills what is not reasonable. A solid reason must be shown for the Incarnation and death of Christ.

The problem, then, is to show the necessity of the Incarnation. Anselm solves it by the following course of argument:

1. Christianity teaches that man is destined to eternal beatitude.

2. He cannot attain to beatitude, except by the remission of sins.
3. The remission of sins is only possible, if adequate satisfaction is made to God.
4. Only Christ, the God-man, can make adequate satisfaction.
5. Therefore, the Incarnation, by which God became man was necessary.

The key idea in this chain of argument is that of *satisfaction*. Every one knows the central argument of the *Cur Deus Homo* about satisfaction. A very brief recital of it will suffice.

Sin is a violation of the Divine honour. Inasmuch as it is committed against God, its gravity is infinite. The satisfaction made for sin must be something not already owed to God: it must be made, if not by the sinner, at least by one of his race; and it must be of infinite worth. The death of Christ meets all these requirements. Since He was sinless, He did not owe the gift of His death to God. He is of Adam's race; while, since He is God incarnate, the gift He offers has infinite worth.

All this is very familiar ground. But what is not always so carefully considered is the argument which proves the necessity of the satisfaction. It contains both an original *metaphysical* and a superimposed *legal* element. The metaphysical basis is the immutability of God. From this proceed both the necessity of human salvation and the necessity of satisfaction, if salvation is to be achieved. The necessity of salvation lies in the Divine purpose to

bring man to eternal beatitude. The frustration of the Divine purpose is unthinkable. The necessity of satisfaction lies in the impossibility of a permanent violation of the Divine honour. If God is not honoured by man's willing obedience, some means of reclaiming the Divine honour must be found. It is, says Anselm, as impossible to withhold from God the honour due to Him, as it is to escape from under heaven. He who escapes from the overarching heaven in one place, only finds it over him in another.

The legal ground of the argument is used to give a concrete form to the metaphysical inviolability of God's honour. The keyword is satisfaction: it is well known that it was taken from the penitential discipline that had grown up in the Church to deal with sin after baptism: works of satisfaction were required before the penitent could be readmitted to the Church's fellowship.<sup>1</sup>

It is not always observed that Anselm uses two different legal analogies in working out the idea of satisfaction. The first is taken from public or criminal law. The public justice of the universe requires that sin be not forgiven without satisfaction. The second analogy is that of private or civil law. God is regarded as an injured party claiming damages for the injury. It is unthinkable that he should not exact satisfaction for His injured honour.<sup>2</sup>

The doctrine of satisfaction, thus supported, is what Anselm proposes as the solid basis whence all other

<sup>1</sup> Franks, *History*, vol. i, pp. 147 ff., 175 f.

<sup>2</sup> On the different legal analogies, cf. Franks, *History*, vol. i, p. 181.

theories of the Atonement may be judged. Let us return to the four older doctrines which he found already in the field, and see how he deals with them. He substantiates them where it is possible; but repudiates them where substantiation is impossible.

1. There is no repudiation of the doctrine of recapitulation. The root idea of it was the recognition of a certain balance between Adam's sin and Christ's righteousness; but instead of expressing this balance by fanciful analogies Anselm exhibits it by means of the rational doctrine of satisfaction. Given this solid basis, imagination may decorate it as it will.

2. The doctrine that Christ's death reveals the love of God is re-interpreted. Once more the theory of satisfaction provides a firm foundation of necessity, showing why God's love had to be revealed in this special way.

3. The doctrine of redemption from the devil is not merely found lacking in solidity. In spite of its being set forth by the Fathers as an obvious deduction from Scripture, it cannot be maintained. The bond that was over against us in ordinances, of which St. Paul speaks,<sup>1</sup> cannot represent any just claim on the part of the devil: it must stand for the just judgement of God, by which the sinner is condemned.

4. The doctrine that forgiveness is sufficiently explained by the mere will of God is also rejected. God is bound to act justly: one who is not just is not God.

The study of Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* is extraordi-

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 14.

narily illuminating as a revelation of the real nature of theology. Its work always has been, and still is, to state Christian doctrine as truth. Here lies its problem. Hence arise all its complexities. It is drawn in two different directions at once. It seeks to be loyal to the faith once for all delivered to the saints; yet it must meet the objections of doubters and maintain the truth of the faith against all adversaries. On the one side Theology is Dogmatic: it aims at the definition of the faith. On the other side it is Apologetic: it seeks to show the rationality of the faith. In reality all throughout its effort is one: as has been said, it is to exhibit Christianity as truth. Dogmatic and Apologetic are not two distinct branches of Theology. They are aspects of the one theological science, related to one another as are the convex and the concave sides of a curve. Dogmatic is the inner face of theology which is turned to the Church, Apologetic the outer face which is turned to the world. The agreement between the two is exact. A Dogmatic can never be independent of the corresponding Apologetic, nor an Apologetic of the related Dogmatic. In fact the two coincide everywhere. There is no dogma into which Apologetic considerations do not enter. There is no Apologetic which does not look towards an end in the Dogma.

What this means is that all theology comes under the head of the reconciliation of authority and reason. That is not a theological method which has been superseded in modern times, as many think, by the method of religious experience. On the contrary the modern method of



experience is simply a new way of solving the ancient question of authority and reason. The theology of experience, of which Schleiermacher is the great representative, is not something altogether new, completely opposed in principle and method to the older theologies. It is a way of rationally justifying Christian beliefs by appealing to the experience behind them, when the original forms in which they were first formulated have come to be no longer tenable.

The fact is that the coincidence of Christian Dogmatic and Apologetic was implied from the first by the missionary nature of the religion. How could Christianity commend itself to a world ignorant of the gospel, except by making contact with existing ideas and translating its message into the terms of ancient philosophy and science?

To conquer the world, Christianity in the person of the apostle Paul became all things to all men, if by any means it might save some. What Paul began, others continued. The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel mark further stages in the intellectual advance of Christianity upon the world. The Logos doctrine which they espoused became the link between Christ and Hellenistic culture. It was the basis both of the dogma and of the apologetic of the ancient Church. Nicaea marks the Christian conquest of the Roman Empire and the Hellenistic civilization; but it marks also the interpenetration of Christianity by the Hellenistic idea of the Logos.

What was true of the first ages of the Church is still

true. The Christian gospel can live on in the world of modern science and philosophy only by means of a theology which is at once Dogmatic and Apologetic. The value of the theology of experience is that it serves this purpose under modern conditions; as the ancient dogma served it in the first Christian centuries.

The next point observable in Anselm's theology is the subjection of tradition to the criticism of reason. Conservative theologians of the present day are apt to see in the *Cur Deus Homo* only a bulwark of orthodoxy. In reality, it starts with a perfectly devastating criticism of traditional ideas.

The rights of criticism in theology have always been opposed by conservative theologians. Most people now, however, would admit that at least the doctrine of redemption from the devil was unsatisfactory; though, as a matter of fact, it had lasted nine hundred years by Anselm's time; the great St. Bernard of Clairvaux vehemently defended it, and Professor Aulén has still a good word to say for it in his recent book *Christus Victor*.<sup>1</sup> But the common opinion of Christianity has rejected this bizarre doctrine: it is a fact which should give conservatism furiously to think. Those, for example, who believe that the cause of evangelical Christianity is bound up with the doctrine of satisfaction, should reflect that that great doctrine was only established at the expense of another time-honoured theory, which presumably few of them would accept. If the doctrine of redemption from the

<sup>1</sup> *Den kristna försoningstanken*, 1930; E.T. as *Christus Victor*, 1931.

devil is open to criticism, no other doctrine of the Atonement can claim to be exempt from it. If nine hundred years is not a sufficient prescription against change, another eight hundred years cannot be so. A living theology must perpetually renew itself by change. It begins with the criticism of past errors, that it may make way for the truths of the present and of the future.

The third thing to be learned from Anselm is that theology must find a standing ground justifiable by reason. If theology is to be at once Dogmatic and Apologetic, a place must be discovered where faith and reason meet in a certainty which is axiomatic. Let us inquire how such a thing can be.

Faith at its highest is not mere belief, it is trust: Reason at its highest is not mere argument, it is insight. Trust and insight come very close together. What do we say when we really trust a man, but that we *know* him to be incapable of a dishonourable action? We have an insight into his character, which is the basis of our trust.

The early Franciscan theologians of the Middle Ages, guided by St. Augustine, distinguished between *credere Deo dictanti* and *credere Ipsi Veritati*. The one is believing what God says: it is belief upon Divine authority. The other is trust reposed upon God Himself, because of the Truth He is: it furnishes a ground for the *credere Deo* which gives it assurance: it transforms it into a *credere Deo propter Se Ipsum*. In the centuries between Anselm and the Reformation the dialectic of these two modes of faith was worked out by a series of great thinkers; as has been

shown most brilliantly by Karl Heim in his book, *The Problem of Certainty in Systematic Theology up to Schleiermacher*.<sup>1</sup>

There was nothing in Anselm's theology that provoked more antagonism than its fundamental presupposition that faith and reason could be brought to coincide. There was another opposed principle, also derived from Augustine, which in the end seemed to the greater part of the schoolmen absolutely axiomatic. This principle was the doctrine of God's sovereignty. There was nothing that so much stood in the way of the Anselmic doctrine of satisfaction as the feeling that the great Archbishop had proved too much. Had not Augustine himself repudiated the idea that human reason could discern an absolute necessity for the Incarnation? It was remembered that he had said: 'We must show, not indeed that no other way was possible to God, to whose power all things are equally subject, but that there neither was, nor ought to have been, any other way more appropriate to heal our misery.'<sup>2</sup>

There is no passage from St. Augustine more steadily quoted than this in medieval discussions of the Incarnation. The feeling of the schoolmen was that expressed before them by St. Gregory of Nyssa, when he said that the patient must not prescribe his cure.<sup>3</sup> It was the feeling expressed after them by Keble, when he bids us not to

Strive to wind ourselves too high  
For sinful man beneath the sky.

<sup>1</sup> *Das Gewissheitsproblem in der systematischen Theologie bis zu Schleiermacher*, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> *De Trinitate*, xiii. 10, 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Cat. Magna*, 17.

The attitude of the schoolmen towards the Anselmic doctrine of satisfaction had to do with more than his particular theory of the Atonement. The debate concerned the nature of theology as a whole. It was a question of its first principle. Is it belief upon authority or trust based upon clear insight? Is it faith in what the Divine Truth dictates to us, or faith in the Divine Truth itself?

The argument begins with Alexander of Hales, who most nearly agrees with Anselm. He alternates between the two positions, and can hardly make up his mind which to choose. The same alternation appears in his disciple, St. Bonaventura; though now the balance begins to descend definitely on the side of belief upon authority.

With St. Thomas Aquinas there is a further step. The sphere of reason is narrowed, and over a great part of the theological field pure authority is recognized as the only guide. Upon it alone depend the doctrines of the Trinity, creation in time, original sin, the Incarnation, the sacraments, purgatory, the resurrection of the flesh, the final judgement, eternal beatitude and damnation.

Duns Scotus reduces the sphere of reason still farther, and reckons still more to authority. But the climax comes with the great nominalist William of Ockham, who not only views almost the whole subject-matter of theology as resting on mere authority, but also works out a most elaborate conception of theological science from this presupposition. According to him, theology can only be an aggregative science, a convenient arrangement of

individual points of doctrine, which have been delivered to us by Divine authority: there can be no possible insight either into their separate truth, or their mutual connexion, or their agreement with our other knowledge. In a word, the doctrines of revelation seemed to Ockham like the individual stars in the sky, which we do but group into constellations in an arbitrary way for greater ease of reference. The real mutual relations of the various revealed doctrines in the universe of truth remain quite unknown.

With this Ockhamist theology the medieval opposition to Anselm reaches its final point. The wheel is come full circle. Anselm believed that he had reached a position from which every theological problem was equally illuminated, so as to be intelligible through and through. His conclusion at the end of the *Cur Deus Homo* is that through the solution of the one question originally proposed, the whole content of the Old and New Testaments has been proved. If the method of Anselm was right, as I believe it was, then that of Ockham was wrong. He emphasized the difference between God and man, until no real fellowship is possible between them. God is so absolutely other than man, that all that the latter can do is to bow to an authority which he does not and cannot understand. But if we can have no insight into the truth of what God says to us, how can we know that we are not the dupes of a deceitful and malevolent spirit, such as vexed the imagination of Descartes?

To-day the Ockhamist position repeats itself in Barth's

assertion of *Deus dixit* as the first principle of all theology, and in the Barthian idea of the absolute transcendence of God. The bridge between Ockham and Barth is, of course, Calvin. The great Reformer wrote his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* as a key to the understanding of the Scriptures. To justify the position that the Scriptures are a Divine revelation, he appeals to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. At first sight, it looks as if he were proposing to rest the understanding of the Scriptures upon a direct insight into their meaning. But a closer examination shows that what Calvin expects to derive from the testimony of the Holy Ghost is an adherence to every jot and tittle of Scripture; as he says, as though God Himself were speaking to us from heaven. We are baulked of the *credere Ipsi Veritati* which seemed within our grasp, and are left with the very different *credere Deo dictanti*.

It would certainly be wrong to suppose that the thought of God's absolute sovereignty is all controlling in the system of Calvin. He inherits from Luther also the view of God as the object of trust, the view which is so magnificently expressed in the latter's *Greater Catechism*: 'God is and is defined to be He, from whose goodness and power thou mayest with certainty promise thyself all good things, and in whom thou mayest take refuge in all impending adversities and perils whatsoever; so that to have God is nothing else, than to trust and believe in Him with the whole heart.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Catechismus Major*; Prima Pars; Praeceptum i. 2.

But Luther too maintained the Ockhamist conception of God in his *De Servo Arbitrio*, and never came to a final settlement as to what notion of God was to have the primacy. In Calvin's *Institutes* the Divine Sovereignty is definitely conceived as the first principle of theology: it is this that gives its special character to the Calvinist as over against the Lutheran form of Protestantism.

It must be said quite distinctly that this was a move in the wrong direction. The doctrine of the Divine Sovereignty can only be made the first principle of theology at the expense of all real understanding, either of Scripture as Divine revelation, or of God Himself. Barth and his disciple Brunner proclaim themselves the genuine successors of the Reformers; but in following Calvin, they have sacrificed the better part of our Protestant heritage from Luther. They so emphasize the transcendence of God as to make a trust based on insight into His character impossible.

It may be observed incidentally that there is a most curious irony in Brunner's praise of Anselm. The rationality that Anselm valued in his theory of satisfaction is what the Barthians most hate. Brunner estimates the theory not by its rational character, but by its apparent agreement with St. Paul. He is like nothing so much as a politician who is a Liberal, not because he believes in the principles of the party, but for the good old Conservative reason that his father was a Liberal before him. Brunner accepts what Anselm meant as a rational doctrine of the Incarnation, not because it is rational (God forbid!),



but because St. Paul said something like it, and the inspiration of St. Paul's epistles settles all controversies.

Let us try to be fair to Barth and Brunner. They have on their side an important religious principle, to which Otto has given masterly expression in his famous book, *The Idea of the Holy*.<sup>1</sup> He goes back to the element of awe in all religions. God, he says, is the Absolutely Other, the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*. But Oman has rightly replied in his recent work, *The Natural and the Supernatural*,<sup>2</sup> that the 'awesome holy' is not the highest idea of God. Taken alone, it leads back to primitive superstition. It gives us a God without moral character; now, such a God, as Anselm quite rightly maintained, is not the true God.

It will not suffice to admit, as Otto does at the end of his book, that in Christianity the irrational, sheer supernatural element in the concept of the Divine is balanced by a strongly marked ethical element. The two factors cannot be left in uncertain equilibrium, so that we may praise the ethical character of Christianity in general, but can still cover various non-moral or even immoral elements in the common Christian tradition by a recourse to the sheer supernatural. What is necessary is to present the rational and ethical in such a way that it may gather round it and absorb the awe created by the sheer supernatural, so as to transform it into that higher awe which is the reverence we feel in the presence of the True and the Good.

<sup>1</sup> *Das Heilige*, 1st ed., 1917; E.T., *The Idea of the Holy*, 1923. <sup>2</sup> 1931.

This brings me easily and naturally to the fourth conclusion which I wish to draw from the previous analysis of the *Cur Deus Homo*: it is the necessity of a metaphysical basis for Christian theology. How are we to deal with non-moral or even immoral elements, when we find them in the Christian tradition? We must do as Anselm did. On the one hand, we must reject what is clearly wrong, as he rejected the doctrine of redemption from the devil. On the other hand, where we find what is simply in itself non-moral and not immoral, we must treat it as a figure and symbol of what is higher than itself.

Not all representations of the Gospel, even in the New Testament itself, stand on the same level. It is to be remembered that the new, just because it was new, had to express itself first of all by means of analogies drawn from the old. There was no other means of expression, if a meaning was to be conveyed. A revelation in the tongue of angels, were that possible, could only be unintelligible to men.

What then are we to say of all the terminology in which the Christian revelation is stated in the New Testament? Much of it belongs to lower religious levels. Most of the inheritance from the past is of distinctively Jewish, but some of it is of ethnic origin. If the message is to be rightly understood, the elements of its expression must be seen in a true perspective. We must find the central point of view from which all the different analogies receive their just proportion.

Another way of saying the same thing is to observe

that before we can take the meaning of any term, it must be baptized into Christ. It receives its proper significance from the whole to which it belongs—the Christian Gospel which is new and not old. The baptism into Christ, just spoken of, is the transformation of the meaning of the term which takes place through the whole content of the New Testament.

The medieval schoolmen, while they were still in part under the influence of Anselm and before scholasticism had degenerated into nominalism, were very conscious that there were higher and lower analogies in Scripture for the things of God. Alexander of Hales is specially notable for the way in which he worked out an order of symbolism, showing how some things more adequately and others less adequately expressed the Being and the operations of God.<sup>1</sup> The same thing needs to be done to-day in a more modern way. We must first find the true central standpoint whence a real insight can be gained into the character of God and the saving work of Christ. Then, in the light of this supreme revelation, we must survey all the different modes and ways of Christian thought and relate them in a due gradation, so as to understand the manifold wisdom of God which meets different human conditions by many degrees of adaptation and accommodation to their needs.

In pursuing the method just described we shall be absolutely at one with Anselm, and we shall be carrying

<sup>1</sup> See my essay, 'The Interpretation of Holy Scripture in the Theological System of Alexander of Hales,' in *Amicitiae Corolla*, 1933, pp. 83-95.

out his endeavour under the changed circumstances of the present time. The difference from him will be that we shall look for the centre of Christianity in a different place from that favoured by him: we shall find it in the experiential doctrine which he regarded as secondary, but which Abelard championed as primary. Our doctrinal perspective will therefore be different from Anselm's. It is the general development of theology which has necessitated the change of centre. Abelard anticipated it in a flash of genius: the slow process of criticism has made it compulsory for all who will follow the argument.

That argument is to be developed in the following lectures; but even now it is possible to see a weakness in Anselm's position. All that results from the Anselmic doctrine of satisfaction is a possibility of forgiveness, which does not involve the actual forgiveness of any one. Anselm himself perceived the shortcomings of his theory in this respect, and in order to obtain practical results from it was compelled to supplement it with the thoughts of Christ's example and merit. It is only by means of these that he is able to show how Christ saves particular individuals.

Christ's death is an example of the pursuit of righteousness: it encourages men to pursue the righteousness which they owe to God, undeterred by any hardships they may experience. As a work of pure supererogation on Christ's part it also constitutes a merit, which must receive a reward from God. Christ Himself, however, needs nothing. To whom, then, can God more fitly grant the

fruit and reward of the Saviour's death than to those for whom He became man and to whom He gave Himself as an example of righteousness? God rewards the merit of Christ by bestowing eternal beatitude on the imitators of Jesus. They are his kinsmen in the spirit and his natural heirs.

It is of enormous importance that Anselm, the great protagonist of a purely objective doctrine of the Atonement, can do nothing with it until the objective work of Christ is shown to produce a subjective response. Then and not till then is the electric circuit of experience complete, and the work of Christ proved to have actual results. *Merit* is certainly a quasi-legal term, and if it stood alone, would not represent any great deviation from the satisfaction-theory.<sup>1</sup> But it does not stand alone: it is vitalized and made efficacious by the reference to the power of Christ's example. What more evidence do we need to prove that Anselm's satisfaction theory furnishes an unsatisfactory basis for theology? Its own author has to move to a completely different point of view before he can show how Christ really saves any man.

Thus in conclusion the *Cur Deus Homo* itself furnishes evidence that the true metaphysical centre of Christianity is not where Anselm seeks it. There is a prime error which vitiates the construction in spite of its courageous loyalty to reason. It was the uncritical identification of the metaphysical and the legal elements which distorted Anselm's

<sup>1</sup> See my *History*, vol. i, p. 182 for a discussion of the exact relation of the terms in Anselm's theology.

view. The truth is that if law is made fundamental, any operation of grace is made impossible. We must seek another foundation for theology than Anselm's: what can it be but the love of God?

## LECTURE II

### THE BIBLICAL MATERIAL

#### A. THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

THE task which was defined in the last lecture was to construct a doctrine of the Atonement from the metaphysical basis of the love of God, illuminating all circumferential points of the doctrine from that centre.

How are we to set about our great problem? In the first lecture it was maintained that theology, being the statement of Christian doctrine as truth, must be at once a Dogmatic and an Apologetic, equally in agreement with Authority and Reason. Strictly speaking, it does not matter from which end we begin. We may begin with Authority and justify it by Reason; or we may proceed from Reason and reach Authority. It is in the end one and the same system of doctrine which we view, now from the side of authority, and now from that of reason: success consists in arriving at the same result, no matter from which end we begin. There are two hemispheres of authority and reason, but only one sphere of Theology. It is the unity of the sphere in the hemispheres that brings the latter together.

Nevertheless, there has to be an order in things. The method of Anselm requires us to proceed from authority to reason. Accordingly, we shall begin with authority, and let reason play upon it in the form of criticism: when

criticism has done its preparatory work, we shall begin again from reason, first to demonstrate the true metaphysical basis of Christianity, and then to interpret therefrom the positive historical elements of the Christian tradition as they come to us from the hands of criticism. Accordingly, the next three lectures will be concerned with the criticism of authority; while the remaining four will provide the rational construction of the metaphysic and will develop the positive doctrines of Christianity from that basis.

The first critical process is a discrimination among authorities. Authority has changed its shape a good deal since Anselm's time. For him it meant the Scriptures interpreted by the Creeds and the Fathers, especially St. Augustine. In practice he deals with the Augustinian tradition. We are not in a position thus to shorten the work, but must go back upon the Bible itself, leaving the doctrinal tradition of the Church to be dealt with separately: of course it has grown greatly since Anselm's day. The work of rational criticism upon authority thus divides itself into three parts. There is first the criticism which distinguishes the authority of Scripture from that of later tradition; then there is the criticism of Scripture itself; finally there is the criticism of the various great historical theories of the Atonement developed by the Church. The first two problems will occupy the present lecture and the next; the third problem will be treated in the fourth lecture.

The discrimination of Scripture from later tradition is



a most necessary element in the preparation for doctrinal construction. It is a thing that is commonly taken for granted within Protestantism; but it is most important to see that it is really a process of rational criticism, equally with those modern studies which are commonly joined together under the name of the historical criticism of the Scriptures. Accordingly, a few words must be said at this point, both to show the rational character of the process, and to justify the attitude of the Reformers to Scripture. The Church in the second century fixed its doctrinal standards as the Creed, the Scriptures, and Tradition. Its object was to assert the positive character of Christianity and to prevent its being quickly dissolved by the Gnostics in a welter of Hellenistic-Oriental syncretism. This settlement continued up to the Reformation: it was generally understood that Creed, Scripture, and Tradition all meant the same, just as Anselm assumes. If the question of their possible disagreement was raised the typical answer is that so admirably given by Aquinas:

‘Sacred doctrine uses authorities drawn from canonical Scripture as its natural basis, whence to argue with absolute cogency. Authorities drawn from other Doctors of the Church, however, it uses as an appropriate basis, but only as an argument with probability.’<sup>1</sup>

It was therefore no theoretical innovation when at the Reformation Luther declared:

‘The articles of faith are not to be built up from the words or the deeds of the Fathers. . . . We, on the other hand, have

<sup>1</sup> S. Theol. i. 1, 8, ad. 2.

another rule, namely, that the Word of God should establish the articles of faith and none besides, not even as an angel.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, if Luther's statement was not an innovation in theory, it was one in practice. The Council of Trent preferred the practice of the Church to its hitherto generally accepted theory, when it declared that Scripture could only rightly be understood through ecclesiastical tradition. We have to take sides in this great controversy, and must do so on grounds of reason. The justification for the Protestant position is that, if we ask what original Christianity is, the only possible appeal is to the earliest written sources. *Litera scripta manet*. Developments of original Christianity are both possible and necessary; but to show their title to be Christian developments, they must exhibit agreement with the documents in which alone original Christianity is certainly preserved for us. Tradition is altogether too unreliable to compete in authority with these precious writings in which Jesus and the Apostles still speak to us.

A decision in favour of the Protestant position, however, only takes us part of the way. We come next to the criticism of the Bible itself. The rational criticism of authority has manifested itself since the Reformation in two further forms beyond the preference of Scripture to tradition. The one is the assertion of the principle of grammatico-historical exegesis: the other is the advent of the higher criticism.

The Reformers themselves were compelled to adhere

<sup>1</sup> Schmalkald Articles, pars ii, art. 2. 15.

to the principle of grammatico-historical exegesis, which was first asserted by the school of Antioch, and was later developed by the Renaissance into a polished instrument of criticism. It is obvious indeed that, if we go to the Scriptures to search for original Christianity, we must take them in their first and natural meaning. That is a principle of rational criticism of the highest importance: all Protestants accept it at any rate in theory; though not all are willing to apply it in practice.

The higher criticism of the Scriptures goes farther. It proceeds to a closer examination of the Scriptures as historical documents with a view to determining their origin and the circumstances of their development. It proceeds by analysis and inference, and it has produced the most amazing change in our apprehension of Scriptural authority. We may indeed say of the higher criticism, as of the sun, that there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. It has melted the traditional forms of Scripture. It has revealed the various elements from which they have been composed. It has welded them into a new unity.

The Protestant who avails himself of rational criticism to justify the preference of Scripture to later tradition, cannot repudiate the higher criticism without inconsistency. The Fundamentalist *via media*, which would have criticism stop at the Bible, is impossible. Either the distinction between Scripture and tradition must be abandoned; or criticism must be allowed to finish its work by a discriminating study of the Bible itself. Committed as we are to the reconciliation of authority and reason, we

must take sides against the Fundamentalist as we did against the Traditionalist. The modern theologian has to use the Bible in the form in which historical criticism has left it: as a matter of fact the cause of Abelardianism is greatly advanced thereby.

What are the results of the historical criticism of the Bible? The theologian to-day finds the Old Testament rearranged. The order is no longer Law, Prophets, and Holy Writings: it has become the remains of the preprophetic religion of Israel, the writings of the prophets, and the various monuments of the postprophetic Judaism. The centre of gravity is no longer in the Law: it is in Prophecy. The New Testament in like manner has acquired a new order. It is no longer given to us as Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and Revelation. The first three gospels are separated from the fourth; and the new order is Synoptic Gospels, primitive or Petrine elements in Acts, Epistles illuminated by the remainder of Acts, Johannine writings. The centre of gravity here, and indeed the centre of gravity of the whole Bible, is in the Synoptic Gospels. The reason for separating them from the Fourth Gospel is that they undoubtedly contain our most authentic account of the teaching of Jesus Himself, while the teaching of Jesus must be the final historical norm of norms for Christianity.

Scepticism about the essential content of the Synoptic narrative, both of the teaching and the main outline of the story of Jesus, seems to me unwarranted. I do not think that the recent study of *Formgeschichte* has been able to

destroy the self-authentication as historical fact, alike of the teaching of Jesus as they give it, and of their story of how He came forward as the Prophet of the Kingdom of God; and was crucified because He claimed farther to be the expected Messiah of Israel. It is said that we only know Jesus through the primitive Church; and that the Synoptic Gospels themselves are evidence of Christian faith rather than simple histories. This is true; and yet the fact of Jesus shines through the faith of the early disciples: 'That one Face, far from vanish, rather grows.'

We have then the teaching of Jesus as our ultimate historical standard for Christianity, since the story can but give weight and body to the teaching, but not affect its principles: we cannot believe that Jesus lived and died on other principles than those on which He taught. The teaching is the standard even for the interpretation of the life. All further developments must be tested by this same standard. Such developments may be not only lawful but highly advantageous. They may come about through the relation of the original principles of Christianity to fresh conditions; and we may be able through the use of them to solve great world problems. But the one thing that seems certain is that the developments can only be called Christian so far as they correspond to the mind of Jesus.

This applies even to Apostolic Christianity. It is said sometimes that the Apostles had new facts for their theology. They had the experiences of Easter and Pentecost, the manifestations of the Risen Christ and the out-

pourings of the Spirit; not to mention the spread of the gospel in the world. This again is true; and it furnishes Apostolic Christianity with larger horizons, new problems, and fresh materials for their solution. But however important the new facts, the mind of Jesus must afford the principles of their interpretation.

Jesus, no doubt, was more than His teaching. His whole personality and His acts exceed that which He put into words. Yet we cannot suppose that what He clearly stated can rightly be traversed by any later interpretation of His Person and Work. Theological theories often stand as the solution of questions for which there is no direct answer in the teaching of Jesus; but they must at least solve them in accordance with His teaching, and so as not to conflict with any of its principles. This is why modern Christianity, disciplined by the higher criticism, represents a new Reformation beyond that of the sixteenth century. Just as that Reformation reduced the standards which had been set up in the second century to Scripture only, so modern Christianity is bound to recognize a final authority within the Scripture itself, the authority of the teaching of Jesus.

What, then, under these circumstances, becomes of the rest of the Scriptures? What theological value do they possess? Do we still like Anselm put forward our theology as a solution of all the questions in the Old and New Testaments? Can we offer it as a key to Holy Scripture, as Calvin offered his Institutes?

The answer to these questions is easy to give, as far as

concerns the New Testament. The rest of the New Testament beyond the Synoptic Gospels contains the first and classical development of the teaching of Jesus in various directions, from which we can argue, if not 'with absolute cogency', yet 'with probability' in a very high degree.<sup>1</sup> We shall not easily assume a deviation of the Apostles from the mind of Christ.

As to the Old Testament, it furnishes the necessary background for the study of the New Testament; and we are able to view it as representing a historical development which ends in Jesus and the Church. Just as we can understand the finished picture of a great artist best by a careful examination of his preliminary studies, so we understand many things in the New Testament best by considering their more primitive forms in the Old Testament. But we must remember always that the New Testament presents itself not only as a fulfilment, but also as a criticism of the Old Testament. The Old Testament, taken as a whole, has always been a pillar of monotheism in the Christian Church; but it contains very different levels in the apprehension of the one God. There is first the preprophetic level, where the main conception of God is that of the Holy in the sense of the sheer supernatural, and where the way of communion with Him is mainly that of ritual, especially the ritual of sacrifice. There is next the prophetic level, where God is conceived ethically as Righteousness and even as Love, and where His ethical nature is put in sharp opposition to all ceremonial modes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the distinction made by Aquinas, *ut supra*.

of communion with Him. There is finally the level of Jewish legalism from Deuteronomy onwards, in which the preprophetic ritual enters into an external combination with the prophetic ethics, so that the two together are regarded as the complete demands of God, and the whole is interpreted through a doctrine of merit and reward.

We have thus three definitely different religious levels in the Old Testament. As a matter of fact the three types of religion overlap historically and do not altogether exclude one another. Nevertheless, the different positions are conceptually separable from one another, as distinguished by different ideas of God. On the line of theological interpretation which we are pursuing we shall have to regard the prophetic element in the Old Testament, not merely as the centre round which the rest is organized, but also as standing at a higher level than either the religion of supernaturalism and ritual, or that of legalism. This will give us a general point of view, from which to judge of particular conceptions which the New Testament borrows from the Old Testament for the expression of Christianity. It is to be expected that elements derived from a lower level will require a more thorough transmutation before they can become completely Christian. In particular the idea of sacrifice, in both its principal meanings of a gift to God and of a communion feast with Him, comes originally from the preprophetic level of Old Testament religion, which we may fairly call the ethnic level, inasmuch as its point of view mainly coincides with



that of primitive religion in general. On the other hand, the notion of merit belongs to Jewish legalism. It is evident that both of these conceptions, that of sacrifice and that of merit alike, require to be deeply baptized into Christ, before they can become adequate for the purposes of Christian theology.

It is a commonplace of modern Biblical study that the closest affinity exists between Old Testament prophecy and the teaching of Jesus. In both we shall find the same supremacy of the ethico-religious over the sheer supernatural and the legal. We begin to divine already that the maintenance of an Abelardian doctrine of the Atonement will coincide in its general principle with the interpretation of the Bible through prophecy as the centre of the Old Testament and the teaching of Jesus as that of the New Testament.

Let us therefore prepare for the study of the teaching of Jesus which will conclude this lecture by an outline sketch of the prophetic religion. First and foremost is the proclamation of the Righteous God, who requires righteousness from His people. In Jeremiah and Ezekiel we find an individualism, in which the relation of God is particularized to every several member of the nation. The Prophets offer the Divine forgiveness of sins on the condition of simple repentance, and promise all blessings to those who trust and obey God. Hosea and Jeremiah present God not only as Righteousness, but still more as Love, and with the utmost tenderness describe His concern for His people and His willingness to forgive.

Finally, in the Second Isaiah God's Righteousness is presented as a Saving Righteousness: it is manifested in the salvation of His people.

The prophets foretold the judgement of God upon sin, but they also predicted a bright future for Israel when sin would be forgiven and God would reign over His people. The Kingdom of God was in the first place the popular expectation of Israel, which looked for all blessings from the realization of the Divine Sovereignty. But, as adopted by the prophets, the hope becomes one of a kingdom of righteousness and widens out towards a universal reign over all mankind. Jeremiah's individualism expresses itself in the prophecy of the new covenant in men's hearts. Foremost among the blessings of the future age is the forgiveness of sins.

Closely connected with the prophecy of the Kingdom of God is that of the Messiah, or Divinely appointed King, who reigns as Representative of God on earth. The conception of the Messiah varies with that of the Kingdom. In the prophetic period proper the Kingdom is expected in this present world, and the Messiah belongs to the same order. In the Apocalyptic literature which continues the line of prophecy under the Jewish legalism, the Kingdom becomes eschatological: the Messiah is correspondingly represented by some writers as a transcendent heavenly being waiting to be revealed upon earth.

Such is the message of the prophets: are we justified in drawing so sharp a distinction as we have done between it and the sheer supernaturalism of the early Hebrew

religion, or again between it and the later Jewish legalism? As to the latter, the prophets undoubtedly speak in the language of rewards and punishments; but all notion of a calculus of merit is absent from them. As to the former, the case is more complicated. The question of the sheer supernatural in itself is easily dealt with. The prophets undoubtedly emphasize the transcendent holiness of God, but they give it a new ethical content: they bow in awe not before the sheer supernatural, but before the God who is 'of purer eyes than to behold evil'.<sup>1</sup>

But what is to be said of the related conception of sacrifice as the way of communion with God? The greatest prophets in general regard repentance as the one sufficient condition for the Divine forgiveness: they polemize against the idea that it can be obtained by sacrifice. But there is one remarkable prophecy which represents the vicarious suffering of the innocent as the occasion of the forgiveness of sins. This is the great prophecy of the Suffering Servant, which has exercised such a powerful influence over New Testament Theology.<sup>2</sup> It has been disputed whether the Servant in this prophecy is an individual, perhaps the Messiah, or is the nation, whether as a whole or in its spiritual kernel. But the most important thing is to understand the principle on which the prophecy is based. The text is unfortunately uncertain, so that no reliance can be put upon the direct reference to the sacrificial institution 'when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin'. But even if such reference be admitted, the

<sup>1</sup> Hab. i. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lii. 13—liii. 12.

prophecy is to be explained not by any recurrence to merely ethnic conceptions of sacrifice, but in harmony with the whole prophetic religion. The general meaning is plain. The Divinely appointed vicarious suffering of the innocent sufferer brings about the salvation of others: the prophet sees that the suffering of the Servant has this result. Later Jewish thought definitely united the idea of vicarious suffering with that of sacrifice and viewed the suffering of the Maccabaeen martyrs as a propitiation to God. But there is no hint of anything of this kind in Isaiah liii. It is, on the other hand, observable that the prophecy definitely exhibits the moral influence of the Servant's suffering upon the penitents who confess: 'It was *our* misdeeds that crushed Him.'<sup>1</sup> There is thus more than a suggestion of Abelardianism if we take the whole context.

Let us note, in concluding this part of the subject, that Hebrew prophecy is fundamentally poetical in character. Its doctrine is not conveyed in the form of reasoned demonstration: it follows the method of intuition and imagination: the prophet 'uses similitudes'.<sup>2</sup> Hence to understand particular points a sympathetic intuition is necessary: we must see all things from the right centre. What is the centre from which the prophetic religion is best to be understood? Not all the prophets occupy precisely the same fundamental position; but looking at the course of prophecy as a whole, it may be asserted on the basis of the foregoing discussion that the central

<sup>1</sup> Moffatt's translation of Isa. liii. 5: italics mine.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hos. xii. 10.

thought towards which it tends is that of a Saving Righteousness, which Hosea and Jeremiah describe as the Divine Love. If this is so, then the fundamental position to which prophecy points us is the same which Abelard has made the basis of his theory of the Atonement. Thus, since prophecy is the core of the Old Testament, the primary question of the Old Testament has been solved in the sense of Abelardianism.

Secondary questions of course remain: it has still to be shown how the prophetic doctrine of judgement and of redemption by vicarious suffering are to be interpreted from the assigned centre. So also the exact position and value of the ethnic and legalistic elements in the Old Testament has to be settled in detail. A complete interpretation of the Old Testament would include all these things. But for our immediate purpose it is not necessary to discuss these questions. We are not directly concerned with the interpretation of the Old Testament, but with the proof of a doctrine of the Atonement; and all such questions substantially recur in the discussion of the New Testament, and still farther, as a consequence, in the formation of the theological system. The Old Testament scholar passes them on to the New Testament scholar, and both in the end pass them on to the systematic theologian.

Accordingly, the next thing in order is the question of the New Testament, which it is proposed to carry in this lecture only as far as a discussion of the teaching of Jesus, the Apostolic teaching being left over till the next lecture.

We need now, first of all, to explain in more detail the critical principles adopted: it is not enough to refer to the Synoptic Gospels in general. It has been recognized that these present to us an authentic picture of the personality of Jesus; but this general recognition does not exempt us from the necessity of criticism in detail. We have the teaching and story of Jesus from the primitive church; and we have to distinguish as well as may be what is original in the record and what has been added from the standpoint of the Church.

A beginning can be made by considering the different sources that lie behind the first three Gospels. I shall follow Manson<sup>1</sup> in accepting Streeter's hypothesis of four documents: Mark; Q, the source of the common material of Matthew and Luke; L, the special source of Luke; and M the special source of Matthew. The last, which represents the teaching of Jesus as a new law, most probably reflects the mind of the primitive Palestinian community; and should not be used to interpret the mind of Jesus.

Using the material that remains to us, we perceive that the teaching of Jesus is an evangel whose three points are the Kingdom of God, the Fatherhood of God, and His own Messiahship. There is no doubt that the Kingdom as preached by Jesus was primarily eschatological. It was the consummation of the age expected from the supernatural intervention of God. At the same time Jesus regarded the Reign of God as already begun in Himself

<sup>1</sup> *The Teaching of Jesus*, 1931.

and His disciples, in whom it was religiously and ethically realized.

Like the prophets, Jesus demanded righteousness as the condition of entrance to the Kingdom. He went on to interpret this righteousness as the love of God and the love of man. The whole law and the prophets reduce to this: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.'

It is at this point that Our Lord's preaching of the Kingdom connects itself with His teaching of the Fatherhood of God—God gives the Kingdom to the righteous; but their righteousness is to be sons of their heavenly Father, trusting and imitating the Father's love. Since, however, men are actually sinners against that love, they must repent. God in His Fatherhood freely forgives the repentant. The parable of the Prodigal Son is the *locus classicus* of Our Lord's teaching on this central point.

The Messiahship of Jesus is the third and last point of the Synoptic Evangel: with it are to be taken Our Lord's words on His own sacrifice. Jesus described His Messianic position by the use of the two names, Son of God and Son of Man.

The meaning of the former title is not in doubt. It is clear that it expresses Our Lord's own immediate filial consciousness of God as Father. It describes that inward character that constitutes Him the Representative of God to men. He represents God, because He knows God.

The title 'Son of Man' is much more enigmatical. The interpretation commonly accepted in recent years is that

according to which 'Son of Man' stands for the Transcendent Messiah, the immediate connexion being with the use of the name in the Apocalypse of Enoch. There is understood to be imported in the Synoptic Gospels a reference to the contrast between the expected glory of the Messiah, when God brings in the Kingdom, and His present humiliation in the person of Jesus. This interpretation has been challenged by Manson in so far as he seeks the affiliation of the name, not with Enoch, but directly with Daniel vii, and argues that it stands, not in the first instance for the Messiah, but for the ideal Israel; he gives the same explanation of the figure of the Suffering Servant and regards the Son of Man and the Servant as identical. Jesus thought of a purified Israel that would undertake the redemption of humanity: actually, however, His conception had first to be fulfilled in Himself alone, before it was fulfilled in the Church through His influence. I hesitate at present to accept this attractive interpretation; and feel it best to stand by the more usual one till more time has gone by, and New Testament scholarship has come to a final decision on the matter. But I will make some remarks which may help to ease the situation as far as our immediate purpose is concerned.

It is, of course, a very important question what Jesus Himself meant by the use of the name 'Son of Man'; but as between the two interpretations just described, it will probably make little difference to systematic theology which we accept. Both stand for true and necessary Christian thoughts, which if not substantiated here, will



certainly prove to be so elsewhere. In the formation of a committee it very often makes little difference to its ultimate composition, who is elected, and who is co-opted: in the end the same people sit round the board. It is often the same, as between Biblical theology and systematic theology: we have naturally to be careful about the exact meaning of Biblical terms, but ultimately the question is what belongs to the Christian religion, whether it comes from this place or that, or is simply determined by the logic of the whole.

The Synoptic Gospels go on to show Jesus predicting both His death and His Resurrection and at the same time interpreting His death as a sacrifice which He must offer. There are two passages especially which show how Jesus reflected over the meaning of His death. In the one we find an *aphorism* or *proverb*, in the other an *acted parable*. The passages have every mark of authenticity.

The proverb or aphorism closes a passage which shows how, not the exercise of power, but loving service is the principle of the Kingdom: the mark of supremacy is to be Servant of all. Jesus Himself illustrates this principle. 'The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.'<sup>1</sup> The words 'for many' at once recall Isaiah liii: a reference to the Suffering Servant is the proper explanation of the passage.<sup>2</sup> The reference is quite general: it is useless to try to go farther into details.

The parable acted at the Last Supper gives more light.

<sup>1</sup> Mk. x. 45.

Cf. vv. 12, 13.

The mention in Mark (followed here by Matthew) of the blood shed for many, again is reminiscent of Isaiah liii and suggests the Suffering Servant. But beyond this, there is a definite use of the idea of sacrifice. The parable of Jesus takes us back through the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah to the old covenant founded by Moses, which was inaugurated with sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> Here communion with God was established by the sprinkling of the blood of the victims upon the people and upon the altar: the comparative study of religion shows that the root-idea in this case is that of the union of the Deity and the worshippers in one common life. But this reference supplies only one *motive* of the action of Jesus. There is another. There mingles with this reminiscence of ethnic religion the ancient conception of the communion sacrifice, itself also ultimately ethnic in origin, according to which God was the host and the worshippers guests, while the victim supplied the feast. In ancient Israel this form of sacrifice survived in the peace-offering, where, however, the flesh only was eaten without the blood. The words of Jesus reflect the still older ritual, in which the whole sacrifice was consumed.

There are important critical problems as to the exact tradition of the words of Jesus at the Last Supper; but these need not detain us, as we are only concerned with the central idea of the acted parable. That appears to be the bringing of men into a new and spiritual covenant with God through the death of Jesus, together with the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxiv. 1-8; Jer. xxxi. 31-4.

thought that each enters individually into the covenant by appropriating the sacrifice. The Matthaean tradition adds that the sacrifice was for the remission of sins, which is probably a gloss; but we remember that forgiveness was in any case a prominent element in Jeremiah's new covenant. The Lucan tradition follows St. Paul in reporting the command to repeat the rite in memory of Jesus: this is wanting in Mark and Matthew, but its presence or absence does not affect the meaning of the acted parable.

At the end of this all too brief survey of the teaching of Jesus, all the questions raised by the Old Testament return upon us with renewed force. In the first place, the teaching of Jesus, like prophecy and the Old Testament as a whole, demands to be interpreted from a central standpoint. I have referred to the aphoristic and parabolic character of His doctrine of His own sacrificial death. But indeed the whole of His teaching is in the form of proverb and parable: the demonstration of this in detail is what gives its peculiar value to Manson's recent study of the subject. This means that the teaching of Jesus, like that of the prophets, is conveyed in individual images often without apparent logical connexion. It is worth while to repeat Stalker's admirable words on this point: nothing truer has ever been written. He says:

'The form of the preaching of Jesus was essentially Jewish. . . . The Oriental mind loves to brood long on a single point, to turn it round and round, to gather up all the truth about it into a focus, and pour it forth in a few pointed and memorable words. It is concise, epigrammatic, oracular. A Western

speaker's discourse is a systematic structure, or like a chain in which link is finely knit to link; an Oriental's is like the sky at night, full of innumerable burning points shining forth from a dark background!<sup>1</sup>

If this is so, then we can see how the theological task inescapably looms upon the Church, as an attempt to understand in systematic form that which was originally given in the form of oracles. It has been said that theology is the statement of Christian doctrine as truth; but for our Western civilization, schooled by Greece, the form of truth is inevitably that of reason and argument. We rejected in the last lecture the Ockhamist conception of theology as an aggregative science, whose order is only that of a catalogue. The very same illustration as Stalker's, of the points of doctrine by the stars in the sky, was used; and it was said that it was not enough to group our doctrinal heads, as the stars have been grouped into constellations, for mere convenience. The right method in theology resembles rather the way in which modern science shows the real relations of the stars in solar and galactic systems, by discovering everywhere the power of the single principle of gravitation.

Jesus unquestionably in his teaching presented the truth from many points of view which at the first sight appear unrelated to one another. He made use of the idea of the sheer supernatural in His eschatological view of the Kingdom and in His view of the Messiah as transcendent. He did not disdain even ethnic and pre-Jewish elements

<sup>1</sup> Stalker, *The Life of Jesus Christ*, p. 105.

in His teaching on sacrifice. Again, He speaks of God as Judge, and even uses the legalist language of merit and reward. Yet, over against all these things He speaks of the Fatherhood of God as though it were unlimited in goodness and forgiving love; and He interprets His own Person through His filial consciousness, and calls others to a trust and obedience like His own.

Whatever be the case with the Bible as a whole, we cannot doubt that there is a single centre for the teaching of Jesus, inasmuch as it springs from the unity of a single mind. If so, where is that centre? Inasmuch as the whole teaching of Jesus is religious, it must be in a conception of God. What was fundamental in Our Lord's conception of God? Where, as we may say, does the metaphysical accent fall in His teaching? God is Sovereign, God is Judge, God is Father; which name most represents ultimate reality as Jesus apprehended it? We resolve the primary question of the teaching of Jesus in the sense of Abelardianism, when we say that the dominant thing in His life is the filial consciousness, which displays itself in an absolute trust and confidence, such as no law and no mere supernatural power can ever create.

Perhaps I am arguing unnecessarily for a foregone conclusion. Yet the central position of the Fatherhood of God in the mind of Jesus has been disputed both from the side of legalism and from that of sheer supernaturalism.

Very early in the history of the Church there was an attempt to understand the teaching of Jesus as a new law. The source M has been mentioned already in this refer-

ence: the Judaizing opponents of St. Paul and the Epistle of James are further evidence of the same tendency. A legalist interpretation of the teaching of Jesus is however impossible. At the most critical points Jesus stood in sharp opposition to the Pharisees, the great legalists of the time. In particular, the parable of the labourers in the vineyard is a direct negation of their principle of strict merit.

The attempt to find sheer supernaturalism in the teaching of Jesus comes from Schweitzer and his followers. It has been asserted that the real interest of Jesus was not in ethics, but in eschatology: His ethic was only an 'interim ethic', a rule for the conduct of men during the short period till the great consummation.

What is to be said of this view? We admit that the eschatology of Jesus represents His conviction of the Divine sovereignty; but it is to be pointed out that He discouraged the *penchant* for the pure supernatural. He would have no seeking after signs. The story of the Temptation in all its forms shows this revulsion from the non-moral use of power. Moreover He saw the Kingdom realized in essence already in His own preaching, in His works of love, and in the gathering of the disciples round Him.

The antithesis of Jesus to the sheer supernatural shows itself in another way in His criticism of ritual, precisely for its lack of moral value. Jesus repeats to the Pharisees the prophetic word, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice'. Not the food that goes into a man can defile the man: defilement is from the evil that proceeds from the heart.

The teaching of Jesus can be interpreted neither as legalism nor as supernaturalism: its centre is the Fatherhood of God. Up to this point we have justified the Abelardian position in Christian theology. Fatherhood and Love mean the same thing.

That of course is not everything. Just as at the end of our study of the Old Testament many problems are left over. Criticism discerns in the teaching of Jesus elements coming from different religious strata in the Old Testament; and the proper interpretation of these from the fundamental principle still remains for the systematic theologian, who seeks to understand Christianity as a whole. Above all there remains the great question of working out the true meaning of Christ's sacrificial conception of His death, as He presented it intuitively in aphorism and symbolic act. But it is of absolute moment to have fixed our central principle in full agreement with the teaching of Our Lord Himself. Our centre is His centre, the Love of God. Other things can wait their time.

### LECTURE III

## THE BIBLICAL MATERIAL

### *B. THE EPISTLES AND THE FOURTH GOSPEL*

THE presuppositions of the Apostolic theology of the New Testament are the great experiences of Easter and Pentecost, together with the establishment of the Church as an organized institution, practising specifically Christian worship with particular rites of its own. These were the rites of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper. The one was a sacrament of initiation into Christianity, by which the neophyte was put under the protection of the Messiah and assured of the forgiveness of sins. The other was a sacrament of communion with the Risen Lord. The command to baptize is ascribed by M to the Risen Christ: the command to repeat the ritual of the Last Supper is part of the Pauline, though not of the Marcan, tradition of the Eucharist. M traces the institution of the Church to the historical Jesus, whether rightly or otherwise it is impossible to be certain. The notion of a Messianic Community, a Remnant or Spiritual Israel, separated out of the nation as a whole by its faith in Jesus as the Messiah, fits in perfectly well with the situation at Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus, facing the issue at Jerusalem, brought Peter to his great Messianic confession. But in any case there is not enough in M to suggest to us how Jesus intended the Church to be organized: the actual organization un-



doubtedly took place under the guidance of the Spirit as received at Pentecost.

The theology of the primitive Palestinian church, which is reflected for us in the first part of the Acts of the Apostles, centred in the Messiahship of Jesus as proved by His resurrection appearances and by the gift of the Spirit: fortified by these evidences of His Messianic power the Church awaited His second Advent, finally to establish the Kingdom. It was also part of the primitive Christian tradition that the Messiah died according to the Scriptures: this we learn from St. Paul writing to the Corinthians. The story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch suggests that 'according to the Scriptures' here stands for a reference to Isaiah liii. For the rest, Palestinian Christianity kept as close as possible to Judaism: M exhibits the teaching of Jesus as a new law and Jesus as a second and greater Moses.

It is not this primitive Palestinian Christianity which has set the pattern for later theological developments. Christianity in its advance upon the world proceeded far beyond this primitive theology. The various Epistles and the Fourth Gospel contain the evidence of the manifold transformations of the gospel occasioned by its transference to the greater world outside Palestine.

The point of greatest transformation is marked by the Epistles of St. Paul. Paul is at one with the primitive Palestinian Church in the fundamental doctrine of the Messiahship of Jesus and in the expectation of His second Advent to establish the Kingdom of God. He agrees with

it also in the ethical demands made upon the Messianic community. Yet under his hands everything has changed. His theology marks the definite separation of Christianity from Judaism.

It was in fact in the form of Paulinism that Christianity started on its world-conquering career; and all throughout its history the Epistles of St. Paul have been one of the most potent factors in its development. It is because of this predominance that St. Paul has been called the second founder of Christianity, and that some have even thought that historical Christianity is more the creation of Paul than of Jesus. Hence has arisen the modern problem expressed in the form 'Paul and Jesus', with the assertion on one side that we must abandon Paul to find Jesus, and the contention on the other side that we only know Jesus properly if we look at Him through the eyes of Paul.

The two other great landmarks of development in New Testament theology are the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel with the related First Epistle of John. These great works depend on Paulinism; but they advance fresh constructions of the Christian religion which in some ways take us beyond St. Paul. Christian theology has been enormously and rightly influenced by the Fourth Gospel: it has perhaps not always paid enough attention to the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It is now of the greatest importance to understand the nature of the Apostolic theology as it is documented for us in the Epistles of Paul, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel. All these New Testament writings

may be said to represent an interpretation of Christianity to the Greek mind, and in so far to the modern mind, which has been schooled by Greece. This is not to dispute the fundamentally Hebrew basis of New Testament thought, on which so much emphasis has been laid by New Testament scholars in recent years. But that the Pauline Epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel represent an interpretation of Christianity to the Hellenistic world is evident from their form, from many points in their matter, and above all from the fact that they belong to Christianity as a missionary religion. So indeed also do the Synoptic Gospels represent Christianity to the Hellenistic world; but they differ from the Epistles and the Fourth Gospel by the prominence of the element of memory in them over that of construction. The Synoptics certainly contain a gospel for the Greek-speaking world; but it is a gospel in which, however much there may be a use of popular literary forms, there is a hard core in the actual reminiscence of the words and deeds of Jesus. However much truth there may in the recent *Formgeschichte*, we cannot doubt that, through whatever means it is presented, we are dealing in the Synoptic Gospels with an authentic tradition of Jesus. On the other hand, in the great Epistles and the Fourth Gospel the balance begins to swing in the direction of construction. It is not the memory of Jesus, but the doctrine of His Person and work that is determinative. That doctrine no doubt has its strength from the memory that lies behind it, just as Antaeus in the fable had his

strength from the earth on which he stood. But still it is primarily a doctrinal construction which we have in these important first-century writings so markedly different from the Synoptic Gospels; and it is from this point of view that I propose to examine in this lecture the principal types of Apostolic theology in the Epistles of Paul, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel.

The distinction of the Apostolic theology from the teaching of Jesus appears in its very form. The form of the teaching of Jesus is poetical, as we saw in the last lecture. It uses proverb and parable: it is aphoristic and oracular. It consists of a series of individual rays which no doubt spring from a common centre, but which have no other connexion. On the other hand, the form of the Apostolic doctrine is, speaking generally, rhetorical. It is developed in the form of continuous argument and in chains of argument. One has only to open the Pauline Epistles to be impressed with their argumentative character. The same is true of the Epistle to the Hebrews; while the most obvious distinction between the presentation of Our Lord's teaching in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Fourth Gospel consists precisely in the recession of aphorism and parable in favour of long trains of argument.

We may say, then, that in the Apostolic theology Christianity, originally preached to the Jews in the forms of Hebrew poetry, is transformed into an argument with the Hellenistic world. The distinction of the two stages is clear. But it is equally important not to misapprehend

the theological character of Apostolic Christianity by overdoing its argumentative nature and making no sufficient distinction between it and the systematic theology of the Church. The Apostolical teaching is rhetorical; it is argumentative; but it is not systematic. Only in a few instances are there the beginnings of systematic thought: we may name in an ascending order the Epistle to the Romans, the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel. All of these, however, the most nearly systematic works in the New Testament, are as far as possible from containing a real system in which the whole of Christianity is expressed in the form of one continuous logical argument.

It is especially important to observe the non-systematic character of Pauline thought. The predominance of argument in St. Paul's Epistles has misled, and still misleads many to think that because there is so much argument, there must be system; and so to infer that if we want to know the last word about Christianity, all we have to do is to look into St. Paul. A French theologian, Havet, is reported to have concluded his presentation of the Pauline doctrine by observing: 'I do not say that is the theology of Paul, I say that is theology.' This attitude of mind quite overlooks the fact that St. Paul's doctrine is not systematic theology, but missionary theology. It is a series of arguments dealing with special questions more or less closely related to one another; while even in the treatment of a single subject Paul changes his standpoint. He will begin a train of thought, break it

off and begin another from a quite different starting-point; and so will go on to a third, without any regard to logical consistency. The fact is that the Pauline theology can only be reduced to anything like system, even for the purposes of presentation, by substituting for it some abstract, which leaves unexpressed and unexplained many elements of his thought. There is a Catholic St. Paul and a Protestant St. Paul; but neither of them is the real St. Paul. One has only to look into the modern New Testament theologies which aim at an objective presentation, to see how hopeless it is to try to reduce the overpowering wealth of the Pauline thought to system. The systems are as many as the authors.

The abundance of St. Paul's ideas may be compared with the luxuriance of a tropical forest, where one form of vegetation is so entangled with another that to separate them is most difficult. One seeks to arrange the theological conceptions of the Apostle in some satisfactory order, only to have the classification break down because of the bewildering and labyrinthine intricacy of his thought. Just as nature continually breaks through and defies the exact classifications of the biologist, so St. Paul's doctrine sets at naught the best efforts of the New Testament theologians.

I do not mean that the various pictures of Paulinism which we possess are not of value. They are of great value. Just as one can make a few pencil lines do duty for the whole complexity and intricacy of a natural object, so with a few well-chosen lines of thought, one can give

a first idea of St. Paul. Such a picture is however unavoidably one-sided, and if taken as the final truth may be misleading. There is in most people's minds in Protestant countries an outline of St. Paul's doctrine of this kind. It is the construction made from his epistles by the theologians of the Reformation, the old evangelical theology, as it is called. Many people so identify St. Paul with this theology that they can see nothing else in him. It is most important to observe that the sketch of Paulinism familiar to us as the evangelical theology is not the whole of Paul; and may actually lead us astray, if we think that it is so, and allow it to blind us to other things in his epistles.

There is no need for me to discuss either the Epistle to the Hebrews or the Fourth Gospel at the same length as the Epistles of Paul. All that needs to be observed is that each of them is in reality far more systematic than anything in St. Paul, which is a fact that should have weight with us in our endeavour after a systematic theology. It is to be expected that we should find our models in the more systematic parts of the New Testament rather than in the relatively unsystematic St. Paul. The Apostle to the Gentiles can do great things for us, if we use him rightly; but we cannot expect to derive from him just that which is not there. We must go to Paul for matter rather than for form: we may expect help from Hebrews and above all from the Fourth Gospel even in form. It will be a valuable evidence that our reflection is on the right lines, if its direction coincides with that of the most reflective Apostolic Christianity. The Fourth Gospel

especially is the obvious New Testament guide towards a right systematic Christian theology.

The best way of describing Paulinism so as not to give the impression that it is more systematic than it really is, is probably to follow the argument of the Epistle to the Romans, adding relevant topics by way of excursus. We shall obtain something like a genealogical tree with a main line of descent, many side-issues, and numerous intermarriages between the branches, producing cross affiliations.

The theology of the Epistle to the Romans groups itself under four heads:

1. Justification by faith;
2. Union with Christ through the sacraments;
3. Sanctification by the Spirit;
4. Predestination, free will, and providence.

1. *Justification by faith.* A Judaizing tendency in the early Church worked for the supremacy of the doctrine of merit and reward and for the retention of the whole Jewish law, both moral and ceremonial, as essential to Christianity. The transition of Christianity in this form to the Hellenistic world was made easy, not only because the best Greek religious thought had viewed the relation of man to God as one of merit and reward, but also because in pagan religion the chief emphasis was laid on ritual. St. Paul opposed the whole movement with a trenchant dialectic, which definitely separated law and gospel. The religion of the law was converted into a pre-



supposition of the gospel. Paul recognizes legalism in two forms. One is the natural theology of the Greeks, which argues the existence of God from the order of the universe and finds His moral law immanent in human reason. The other is the national legalism of Israel with its written law, ceremonial and moral. It is true that by keeping the law in either form there should be a way into the Kingdom of God; but the universality of sin shows the failure of this way.

While Jesus recognized the fact of sin, Paul has a doctrine which explains its universality. In fact, he has two explanations. He regarded it as a consequence of descent of all men from Adam, who had sinned in the beginning. He also explained the universal hold sin has over men from the power in all men of the flesh, or lower nature. The two views stand side by side, without clear relation to one another: Paul does not say whether it was the power of the flesh that caused Adam's fall, or whether it is his fall that has caused the power of the flesh. This uncertainty makes the whole Pauline doctrine of the origin of sin obscure; so that it can be very differently interpreted. All that is really clear is the Apostle's absolute conviction that sin, not only is, but must be, universal. The result is that, if God judges man according to the law, no one will be justified.

This apparently hopeless situation is met by the grace of God, which justifies men freely through the redemption which is in Christ. Exactly how the Apostle conceives this redemption is not made clear either by the great

classical passage, Romans iii. 24-6, or by the numerous other passages in his epistles which speak of the death of Christ. Paul saw the great redemption from many sides. Brunner indeed appears to consider that the Pauline doctrine is here quite clear; but the verdict of F. C. Baur seems much sounder, when he says that many mediating ideas are wanting.<sup>1</sup> The result is that Romans iii. 24-6 can be explained in a great many different ways; as for example, by orthodox Protestantism, by Grotius, by Sanday and Headlam, and by Anderson Scott.

Some things, however, are clear. The Divine way of redemption is through the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of the Messiah, whom Paul conceives as the Pre-existent Son of God, born as a man. Faith in Jesus as the Risen Lord and in God's grace manifested through Him is the one condition of the justification that fits men for the Kingdom of God.

What St. Paul means by justification is simply the forgiveness of sins, expressed in legal terminology. Justification signifies the pronouncing of the sinner righteous before God; but, as St. Paul conceives it operative in Christianity, it proceeds upon no legal principle: it is purely an act of grace, by which the Apostle means that free and spontaneous favour of God which is the expression of His love. Its effect is reconciliation and peace with God. In this sense it is the first point in St. Paul's gospel, and can indeed stand for the whole of it.

The critical question for us is to see if we can come any

<sup>1</sup> Baur, *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung*, 1838, p. 8.

nearer to St. Paul's conception of how redemption comes through Christ. It has been said that his thought is many-sided. Let us look at its different sides.

Paul regards the death of Christ as a revelation of the Divine love to sinners. From Him comes the great Abelardian text: 'God commendeth His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' But this simple thought is complicated by others. The death of Christ is a propitiation<sup>1</sup> set forth by God: it shows His righteousness in respect of the passing over of former sins. It redeems us from the curse of the law by Christ's own endurance of the curse. It cancels the bond of the law, and breaks the power of the angels who, according to the Pauline cosmology, are its administrators. Paul also says that Christ, who knew no sin, was made sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. There is the notion of an exchange of parts between the Redeemer and the redeemed. In other places St. Paul speaks of Christ's obedience as counterbalancing Adam's disobedience: he also says that by this obedience Christ merits a universal lordship over every

<sup>1</sup> This is the usual translation of *ἱλαστήριον* in Rom. iii. 25; an alternative rendering is 'one with propitiatory power' (a sense preferred by Sanday and Headlam): while Anderson Scott gives 'one able to restore friendly relations' (see his *Living Issues in the New Testament*, 1933, p. 50). After the delivery of this lecture another very interesting suggestion was made to me by my friend, T. W. Manson, based on Dodd's proof that *ἰλάσκεσθαι*, as used in the LXX in connexion with the cultus, refers properly to God's own act in Himself delivering men from sin (*Journal of Theological Studies*, July 1931, pp. 352 ff.). What Manson suggests is that *ἱλαστήριον* should be considered as a neuter noun, which in view of its form means the place where God shows mercy and grace: cf. 2 Cor. v. 19.

power in Heaven, earth, and hell. The Resurrection of Christ likewise plays its part in redemption: it manifests Christ's deliverance from the sphere of sin, into which He had entered for our sakes; and with His deliverance goes ours also.

It is quite impossible to reduce all this to system. Yet the massive effect of it is tremendous; Paul uses all manner of plastic imagery to exhibit the greatness of what Christ has done. Three main points of view seem to emerge more or less clearly: all become starting-points for the theology of the Church.

1. Christ by His death has revealed the saving love of God.
2. He has met the claims of the powers that hindered our salvation; whether these are to be thought of as the Divine law and its curse upon sin, or more concretely as the angels whom God has entrusted with its administration and execution.
3. Christ's deliverance from the sphere of all these powers is implicitly ours also. This is essentially the idea of Recapitulation, or of Christ as the Head of a saved humanity.

These different conceptions of the work of the Saviour become the basis in history of different theories of the Atonement. The wealth of Paul's thought has provided Christian theology with endless problems; but there is none anywhere more important than the consideration of the relative value of his different views of the death of

Christ. As we read the Epistles we feel ourselves in the presence of titanic power, as of a volcano in eruption: the problem of utilizing the lava-flood of Pauline religion to fertilize a permanent Christian education has been with the Church ever since the second century.

2. *Union with Christ through the Sacraments.* This second element of the Pauline gospel is connected only at one or two points with the doctrine of justification. It meets a problem that rises out of it, but brings in quite new ideas. The problem is this: if the law has been put out of count by the gospel of justification, what basis is there for a Christian ethic? The Pauline dialectic is equal to this question. He, who has been baptized, has been made one with Christ in His Death and Resurrection by the symbolism of immersion and emergence. Therefore, he already belongs to the new world of the Kingdom: let him live as a member of it.

In other places the Apostle attributes union with Christ to faith. There is accordingly a problem, as to how he relates faith and baptism. Is baptism only a symbol, or is it more than a symbol? Is it an effective symbol? It is hard to read St. Paul's mind on this point. Baptism and faith run parallel, side by side. The things that are attributed to the one are attributed to the other also. Their ultimate relation is not determined. It is a good example of the unsystematic character of St. Paul's thought, which develops ideas as occasion needs, and then drops them for something else.

There is an almost greater uncertainty as to the relation

between faith and the Lord's Supper, which also is thought of as a means of union with Christ. Paul can represent the Supper as a simple memorial rite; but it is also clear that he regards it as a substitute for the Jewish and heathen sacrifices. It is a communion meal, in which the communicants eat at a table where the Lord Himself is the sacrificial feast. Union with the Risen Lord is brought about by the eating and drinking of the spiritual food and drink, which is Himself.

The result of all this is that Paul thinks of the Christian as united to Christ, whether by faith or by the sacraments or by both. As thus united to Christ, he is called to live a new life, in agreement with the ethics of the Kingdom.

3. *Sanctification by the Spirit.* What, then, of the hold which sin has over us through the flesh? Once more the Pauline dialectic meets the situation with a fresh turn of thought. The Apostle evaluates the Spirit in the Church as the actual earnest of the Kingdom. The Spirit is not merely sent by the Risen Messiah, as the primitive Church believed. It is His own Spirit, the power of His Risen Life, which is shared by those united to Him. As such, the Spirit is the spirit of sonship. It creates trust in God's Fatherhood and obedience to the Divine will, and even now is a pledge of eternal life.

It is important to observe how, in this Pauline doctrine of the Spirit, the fundamental elements of the Synoptic presentation of Christianity are to be found in a different form. Jesus called for trust in and obedience to the Father, and promised eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

It is just this trust and obedience which the Spirit creates in the Christian, and it is the same promise of which He is a pledge. When we are comparing the religion of Paul with that of Jesus, we should remember that in its final issue, the doctrine of the Spirit, the Pauline theology outlines just the same religious experience of the members of the Kingdom as had been previously described by Jesus.

4. *Predestination, Free Will, and Providence.* The doctrines of justification by faith, of union with Christ by the Sacraments, and of sanctification by the Spirit, complete the Pauline gospel, as it is set before us in Romans. The other great doctrine of the Epistle, that of Divine Providence, is worked out mainly with reference to the failure of Israel to receive the gospel. There could not be anywhere a better example of the dialectical, but unsystematic, character of St. Paul's thought than in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh chapters of Romans. In the ninth chapter Paul falls back on the Absolute Sovereignty of God; in the tenth he insists on human freedom; while in the eleventh he opens out a view of the Divine Providence, in which even apparent evil tends to an ultimate good.

The doctrine of Absolute Sovereignty is simply the sheer supernaturalism of the Old Testament; we see that St. Paul had not yet freed himself altogether from this doctrine, to which when hard pressed he could resort; but we see also that he did not live in it exclusively, and that in the end of his argument he transcended it. But it is interesting to note that if we add this position of St.

Paul to the other three which emerged as a result of our study of his gospel of Justification, we have the elements of the four types of doctrine of Atonement criticized by Anselm in the *Cur Deus Homo*, viz.:

1. The recapitulation of humanity.
2. Redemption from a hostile power.
3. The revelation of the Divine love in the Cross.
4. The explanation of the Incarnation from the pure Sovereignty of God.

Anselm represents a thousand years of development from St. Paul; and the germinal thoughts of the Apostle had of course grown a great deal in that time. But the beginnings of the doctrines taken by Anselm from Augustine are already present in the Pauline theology. We see that what Anselm was trying to do in the *Cur Deus Homo* was to understand that theology and reduce it to system. The difference between his position and ours is not so much even the change brought about by the Reformation, in dismissing tradition in favour of Scripture only; much more is it that, instructed by historical criticism, we are able to go back from Paul to Jesus as reported in the Synoptic Gospels, and judge by that fundamental criterion even the great and mighty movement of Paulinism, whence both the Catholic and Protestant forms of Christianity have undoubtedly originated. The question that we have to face is this. How far was Paulinism a true and legitimate development of the teaching of Jesus? It cannot but be a great gain to the Church, if, following



the method of Anselm, but with critical advantages he did not possess, we can find a central point of view whence the fundamental agreement of Paul and Jesus can be seen. That will enable us to make the best possible use of Paulinism without any danger of misapprehending its proper value. There is such a danger: and it cannot be said that the Church has entirely escaped it.

What we have to look at, in the first place, is what St. Paul has done in the interpretation of Jesus, and what he has not done. What he has done is to answer all sorts of inevitable and necessary questions about the Person and Work of Jesus, questions provoked by the Apostle's missionary career and experience. The answers he has given are in the form of great theological doctrines, the work of an inspired genius and master, at once burning with missionary zeal and conversant with the thought of the time, Jewish and Hellenistic. What St. Paul has not done is to co-ordinate his doctrines into a system, so that they are intelligible from one central principle. We ourselves are left to find the right centre from which to view them. It is just as necessary as it was in interpreting the teaching of Jesus. The individual oracles of Jesus have been replaced by great theological arguments; but the necessity of systematization remains equally imperative.

It is admittedly often more difficult to see the general tendency of Pauline thought than it is to see that of the teaching of Jesus. The masses of detailed arguments overwhelm the reader, till he often cannot see the wood for the trees. That is why Paulinism has been both a help

and a hindrance to theology in the history of the Church. It has been a help because of the richness and depth of the Pauline thought; it has been a hindrance because the armour of the New Testament Saul, who is also called Paul, has often been too heavy for the theological David. The prime error in the theological use of the Pauline Epistles is to attempt an aggregation of their different contents, in which everything finds a place without any attention to perspective. If anywhere in the New Testament it is necessary to follow the spirit rather than the letter, it is in the epistles of Paul. The Apostle often pursues long chains of argument to a point where the conclusions are simply in opposition to statements made by him at other times. He is like an orator who argues both *ad rem* and *ad hominem*, but who is to be held not to his particular arguments, but to the drift of the whole speech. He is like a sailing ship, tacking this way and that way, but in the end following one definite direction, as the course is set off on the chart.

Thus in his doctrine of justification St. Paul appears for the moment to occupy a legalistic standpoint. The justification of the believer is conceived as the anticipation of the final judgement which decides on his fitness or unfitness for the Kingdom; the whole argument starts from a legal basis, and to the end is stated in legal terminology. Similarly, the Apostle comes near to pure supernaturalism in his doctrine of Union with Christ through the Sacraments and in his doctrine of the Spirit. He speaks as if the rite of baptism in itself constituted union with

Christ and bestowed the Spirit, and as if the Lord's Supper acted similarly. There is no doubt that in the early Church participation in the sacraments was an ecstatic experience: Paul conceives the eternal life of the future Kingdom to be mystically anticipated in the Sacraments whereby a man is united to the Risen Christ, and receives the Spirit which is the earnest of the Kingdom. There is a real parallelism with the Hellenistic-Oriental mysteries, in which immortality after death was secured through ritual acts. It is easy to interpret St. Paul's sacramentalism as pure supernaturalism, if we have an eye only to what he says at the moment.

Nevertheless, both the legalist and the supernaturalist interpretations of the Apostle are wrong in principle: they overlook the all-important fact that Paul's apparent legalism and supernaturalism are only stages in a dialectical process. We have always to look at the end which is aimed at. The end of all the Pauline theology, whatever the twists and terms of the dialectic, is always just that life of trust in and obedience to God, which the Apostle like his master describes as sonship.

A careful examination of the Epistles everywhere shows sufficient pointers to prevent our standing in the argument of the moment, and to indicate the thought of God's love revealed in Christ as the underlying motive of the whole dialectic. Thus the doctrine of justification is stated in legal terms; yet justification is said to be by grace 'apart from law'.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the sacraments from one side

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 21.

appears no more than ethnic supernaturalism: but we are held back from taking this view of it by the parallel doctrine of union with Christ by faith. The doctrine of the Spirit, if supernaturalist in form, actually reproduces Our Lord's own experience of the Father as has been pointed out already. Even the doctrine of predestination melts into that of providence. The truth is that everywhere the love of God in Christ is the fundamental motive which breaks through all other trains of thought. The work of interpreting St. Paul from an Abelardian centre may often be difficult; and often we shall have consciously to prefer the spirit to the letter. But it will be no small thing in this way to maintain the unity of the New Testament, and to conserve for the Church the wealth of St. Paul's epistles, without in any way employing it to undo the work of His Master by emphasizing the wrong things in them, so as either to legalize or ethnicize Christianity.

We have further to remember that the Epistles of St. Paul are not the only precious treasure of Apostolic Christianity which the New Testament contains. In some ways the Pauline development was one-sided, even if it did spring from the true centre of Christianity; and other New Testament writers serve to correct the balance.

That correction of balance is certainly not to be seen in the Epistle of James, the essential content of which, according to Titius, is monotheism, eschatology, and ethics.<sup>1</sup> The Epistle is historically rather than doctrinally interesting. It represents a view of Christianity in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Titius, *Die neutestamentliche Lehre von der Seligkeit*, iv. 117.

which the tradition of the teaching of Jesus has been levelled down to little more than the Pauline natural theology. It stands for a new Christian legalism, which has nothing specially Jewish in it, and is Christian only so far as it is associated with faith in the Messiahship of Jesus. The value of the Epistle is that it helps us to understand one of the difficulties the early Church had with Paulinism. The very fertility of St. Paul's thought and especially the startling turns of the Pauline dialectic were a hindrance to many minds: something simpler was necessary at any rate for the average Christian. The Epistle of James was meant to secure the Christian ethic from obscurity by St. Paul's doctrine of justification; but to resort to a simple legalism was not a theological advance upon St. Paul. A better simplification of Paulinism was necessary.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty of all in Paulinism was and is what may be called, without prejudice, the Apostle's Gnosticism. St. Paul almost ignores the earthly life of Jesus which is the subject-matter of the Synoptic Gospels. For it he substitutes a Gnosis or higher knowledge of the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of the Messiah. There is the barest reference either to the words or to the example of Jesus.

An attempt to correct this Gnosticism already begins in the First Epistle of Peter, which represents a simplification of Paulinism of a practical character with an added reference to the human example of Jesus. Moral renewal is immediately connected with the sacrifice of Christ, the

intermediate turns of the Pauline dialectic being omitted. That is highly important: especially in conjunction with the stress that is laid on the example of Christ. We are already on the way to the great doctrinal developments marked by the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Fourth Gospel.

While St. Paul distinguishes Christianity from Jewish legalism, the Epistle to the Hebrews contrasts it with Old Testament ethnicism. It is the eternal essence of what the Jewish sacrifices express in an imperfect and transitory way. They achieve only a ceremonial cleansing: it purifies the conscience. There is, however, no explanation of the working of the Christian sacrifice: the idea of sacrifice is regarded as self-explanatory. We have to remember that everywhere in the ancient world sacrifice was the normal mode of communion with the Divinity.

The chief stress in the Epistle falls not on the sacrifice but on the priesthood of Christ, who eternally offers in heaven the sacrifice made once for all on earth. Christ is the Eternal Son of God, who took flesh and blood to deliver man from the power of the devil and of death. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. His endurance of temptation and sympathy with tempted humanity fit Him for His priestly office. The willing obedience of His sacrifice is emphasized. Christ is an example of constancy in suffering which we must follow.

It is a valuable thought that the sacrifice of Christ belongs to a different order from that of the Jewish sacrifice. The emphasis on Christ's humanity is even more

important. The Epistle to the Hebrews reminds us very forcibly how one-sided St. Paul was in making so little of the human experience of Jesus. It refers us back to the Synoptic tradition as the complement of Paulinism, and it prepares us to estimate the Fourth Gospel as the crown and consummation of New Testament Christianity, just because it unites the Pauline and the Synoptic traditions in a unique synthesis where Gnosis and history make one seamless whole.

The Gnosis of the Fourth Gospel is not like the Pauline Gnosis centred in the Cross: it is a Gnosis of the Incarnation. The chief doctrine of Christianity is not that Jesus is the Messiah, or even that He is the pre-existent Son of God; it is that He is the Logos, the Divine Reason immanent in the Creation and now Incarnate. The Logos is the Revealer of God. As God is Light and Life, so is the Logos the Life and Light of men; supremely such in His Incarnation.

The thought of Christ's sacrifice persists, stress being laid on its voluntary character: it is supplemented by the other thought that His death is a victory over the devil; the Resurrection, too, is emphasized. But these things are not in the centre of the picture. While the Epistle to the Hebrews identifies Christianity with the Eternal Heavenly Kingdom of God, the Fourth Gospel declares that eternal life may be enjoyed in the world even now as a Knowledge of God and of the Incarnate Logos. Faith in the Johannine Christianity becomes practically identical with Knowledge.

The Johannine theology carries on the Pauline doctrine of the sacraments. New life comes by water and the Spirit; while it is sustained by eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Christ. The life so nourished is immortal. But the Johannine mysticism also appears in a non-sacramental form: it is expressed as an abiding in Christ which has ethical fruit. The moral demands of Christianity are expressed with great plainness and emphasis in the Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle of John.

The Fourth Gospel is not a systematic treatise, but a book of mystical contemplation in which one aspect of Christianity perpetually dissolves into another. But, whoever was its author, it deserves to be called the work of John the Divine, in so far as it suggests for the first time the bringing of the whole of Christianity under a single principle, that of the Revelation of God in Christ. If we add to this, the fact that the First Epistle of John declares that God is Love, and that we love because He first loved us, we have already the essential elements of an Abelardian theology. There are indeed in the Johannine writings traditional elements, concerning which we can say 'we see not yet all things made subject' to the revelational principle. But that is no more than to say, as has been said before, that, when all has been gathered from the New Testament that can be gathered directly, there is still much work left for the systematic theologian to do.



## LECTURE IV

### HISTORICAL THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT

OUR study of the Biblical material of the doctrine of the Atonement has prepared us to undertake the criticism of the existing historical theories of the subject, which forms the next step in the application of the Anselmic method.

The four theories criticized by Anselm himself were:

1. The doctrine of recapitulation;
2. That of redemption from the devil;
3. The explanation of the death of Christ as a manifestation of the Divine love;
4. The refusal to find any other explanation than the sheer sovereign will of God.

All these theories came to Anselm through Augustine: it has been shown that all have a starting-point in St. Paul. Anselm's reduction of his problem to the criticism and restatement of these four doctrines only means that by his time the great variety of doctrinal suggestion contained in the Bible had consolidated itself into a comparatively few definite forms, round about which the remaining thoughts of primitive Christianity spread themselves loosely after the manner of a penumbra.

I am following Anselm in his splendidly illuminative suggestion that a central standpoint is to be found, whence all aspects of the Incarnation and the Atonement are to be seen in their proper perspective. But inasmuch as I do

not find that central standpoint where Anselm did, a different order of criticism becomes necessary. His own doctrine of satisfaction and merit becomes one of the theories to be criticized; while the doctrine of the revelation of God's love in the cross, thought by him insufficient, is taken as the basis from which all other doctrines are to be criticized and interpreted. It has still of course to be proved true and sufficient.

As a consequence of this position the grouping of the doctrines to be criticized will arrange itself differently from that of the *Cur Deus Homo*. It will also be affected by the fact that there have been great theological developments since Anselm. Finally, the modern study of the history of dogma has revealed doctrinal affiliations which the Middle Ages did not recognize: in particular the doctrines of recapitulation and of redemption from the devil are now seen to be variations upon a common theme. Nevertheless, it is a striking evidence of the continuity of Christian thought that in the end the different theories of the Atonement still extant fall with only slight modification into the Anselmic scheme. We have only to bring recapitulation and redemption under one head, and to include the doctrine of satisfaction and merit, and we obtain the following order of doctrines to be criticized:

1. The doctrine of recapitulation and redemption. This is the Patristic theory, fundamentally Greek in origin. Aulén in his recent book *Christus Victor* calls it the 'classical' theory; but the name is question-begging. The

mere fact that this theory was actually developed first in the order of history, does not make it a standard by which other theories are to be tested.

2. The doctrine of satisfaction and merit. Aulén calls this, quite rightly, the Latin theory. It was conditioned undoubtedly by the characteristic Latin conception of Christianity, which differed from a very early stage from that of the Greek Church. This great theory has many forms. Its main types are the Medieval, the orthodox Protestant, and the Grotian. In spite of all differences, it seems best however to recognize their common character, and bring them together under this one head.

3. The explanation from the Sovereign Will of God. This is not so much an independent historical theory as a doctrine kept in reserve against objections to the ordinary ecclesiastical theories, whether Greek or Latin. It is, however, important, as the acute mind of Anselm discerned.

4. The doctrine that Christ in His life, and especially in His death, reveals the love of God is the experiential or Abelardian theory. It now furnishes our critical basis; afterwards, in the last four lectures of the course it is to be proved and exhibited as the principle of a systematic statement and reconstruction of doctrine.

The general criticism to be passed upon the great Greek and Latin theories is that they afford no synoptic view of Christianity as a whole, but have to be completed by views taken from quite different standpoints. It is a broken and distorted view of the Christian religion that we get in the end.

The fundamental criticism of the doctrine of God's absolute Sovereignty is just that it means the abandonment of any Christian view at all. It is the *via negativa* which ends in complete darkness. It furnishes no perspective of Christian doctrines, but reduces them all to equal annihilation. There can be no perspective where there is no light.

The Greek and Latin theories of the Atonement are of a very different character from this explanation of it by the sheer supernatural. They are intelligible theories, deserving of the highest respect, however open to criticism they may be in some ways. We can never forget how they have served past generations of the Christian Church and how they still serve great parts of it even to-day. Only, that must not prevent a free criticism of them: the helps of the past are far too often the hindrances of the present.

The Greek theory of the Atonement has been outlined already in the first lecture as the subject of Anselm's criticism; but we must now go a little more into detail about it. Its primary form is the doctrine of recapitulation. Jesus Christ is the Second Adam or new Head of humanity, who by the saving acts of His Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection, undoes the disastrous consequences of Adam's fall. Over against Adam's sin is set Christ's obedience; over against the corruption induced by sin stands the incorruption with which His Divinity interpenetrates humanity. The central idea of the doctrine is that of a ferment in human nature, reacting against the

sin and corruption which possess it since the fall of Adam, and renewing it to holiness and immortality.

The doctrine of redemption from the devil is a dramatic representation of the same thought. In the Patristic theology the one doctrine continually passes over into the other. Instead of the abstract conception of the victory of holiness and incorruption over sin and corruption we have the concrete picture of the triumph of Christ over the devil, which is won by the payment of His death as a ransom to the tyrant for the captives whom he holds. The prisoners go free, while in the end the devil cannot hold the soul of Christ.

There is certainly a difference between the two forms of the Greek doctrine of the Atonement. If in the former a balance is struck between sin and holiness, corruption and incorruption, in the latter the notion of an equivalence is sharpened into the conception of a legal claim on the part of the devil, which has to be met. This is the point of connexion between the Greek and Latin theories. Among the Greek fathers, Athanasius approaches the Latin theory, when he represents the death of Christ as paying the debt of sin, lest God's veracity should be impugned; as would be the case, if the Divine threat to punish sin with death should go unfulfilled.

At first sight, it may seem a very different thing to pay a debt to the devil and to pay one to God; but really there is not so much difference as appears on the surface. The power that opposes man's deliverance is lodged in the one case in a Divine attribute; in the other in the devil, as the

public executioner of the Universe. In both cases there is a dualism, as Aulén quite rightly points out. In the one case the dualism appears in the Divine nature itself, in the other in the Divine government of the universe. An absolute dualism of the Zoroastrian type was never recognized by any Christian.

What is to be said about this Greek doctrine of the Atonement? It has without doubt a very close affiliation with the New Testament. It proceeds upon certain quite definitely Pauline and Johannine thoughts. Christ as the Second Adam, His obedience, His victory over sin and death, and over the devil are all in the Epistles of Paul and the Fourth Gospel. So too is the metaphysical basis from which the whole theory is constructed, which is the Logos doctrine. It is the Divinity incarnate in Jesus which explains alike His undoing of sin and death and His triumph over the devil.

But a doctrine may be derived directly from the New Testament and yet in its actual use it may fail to represent New Testament Christianity. Ritschl found fault with the Greek doctrine, because of its concentration on immortality and incorruption, and its ignoring, as he said, of the all-important question of reconciliation with God.<sup>1</sup> Aulén denies this contention: he says that the Greek doctrine shows in one concrete picture how sinful man, doomed to death, is brought back to God, to life and immortality. It is a doctrine, says Aulén, of the removal not only of corruption, but of sin, and as such is a genuine

<sup>1</sup> Ritschl, *Justification and Reconciliation*, i, E.T., p. 8.

doctrine of Atonement and Reconciliation. Aulén may have answered Ritschl; but the fundamental criticism to be passed on the Greek doctrine of Recapitulation and Redemption goes far deeper than that of Ritschl. It is that this doctrine represents only one part of the Greek conception of Christianity, and that to make it effective for the salvation of the individual, it has to be supplemented by a shift to a totally unrelated point of view.

This other Greek standpoint is that of a legalism which was established by means of the Logos doctrine in quite a different way. From the Apologists of the second century onward the Incarnation was regarded as a Revelation of the true knowledge of God and of His moral law, accompanied by the promise of immortality to those who keep the law. In a word, Christianity was presented under the juristic aspect of merit and reward; and this was indeed the fundamental conception of its nature upon which the doctrine of recapitulation and redemption was reared as a superstructure.

The superstructure was quite ineffective in producing any real modification of the fundamental legalism. The doctrine of recapitulation and redemption was actualized through the sacraments; but what did this actualization amount to? No more than this, that there was a forgiveness of prebaptismal sin in baptism: all other blessings of salvation spoken of in connexion with baptism were really only a matter of mystical anticipation. The Eucharist renewed this anticipation under another form. In the reception of the sacraments the Christian felt himself

mystically one with Christ in His death and resurrection and participant of His holy and immortal life. But all this was no more than anticipation: the baptized and communicant Christian still found himself under the law and obliged to merit salvation by his own efforts. The Greek Church had a very narrow appreciation of the meaning of grace: in practice, after the one forgiveness conveyed in baptism, it meant very little more than God's good gift of law and promise. Only by the keeping of the law and the acquirement of merit could the mystical anticipations of the sacraments be realized. The sacramental moments might be moments on the mount, where the pilgrims had a vision of the celestial city; but they came down from the mount to walk on the hard highway of the law and laboriously merit salvation.

The Greek sacramentalism, like the Greek theology, is directly derived from St. Paul and the Fourth Gospel. Yet in the end the difference from the New Testament writers is plain. The apparent legalism and supernaturalism of St. Paul are but moments in a dialectical process: what remains of them in the Fourth Gospel are moments in a dissolving view: in each case the final and abiding issue is the life of sonship, from which all thought of merit is excluded, and which is experiential in character. It is clear that if the doctrines of recapitulation and redemption are to find a place in a complete view of Christianity, they must be interpreted in a very different way from that of the Greek theology. So also must the sacraments find a more satisfactory interpretation.



The Latin doctrine of the Atonement is the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction and merit. Its original Anselmic form was studied in the first lecture. Christ, by giving to God the life He does not owe to Him, makes the satisfaction required for the injury done to God's honour by human sin: He also merits, as a reward for His free gift, the eternal life which is bestowed on His imitators and spiritual kin. There is no need to repeat now the further details of the Anselmic theory. What is important is to observe the way in which St. Thomas Aquinas built the doctrine of satisfaction and merit into a systematic construction along with the doctrines of the law and of sacramental grace: it is in connexion with these other doctrines that the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction and merit actually functions in the standard medieval view of Christianity.

The doctrine of the law in Aquinas corresponds to the Greek doctrine of Revelation through the Logos. Man is given the law as a guide to eternal beatitude: by obedience to the law he acquires merit and wins the everlasting prize. But medieval Catholicism, taught by Augustine, had a fuller idea of grace than that of the Greeks. Augustine thought of grace beyond baptismal forgiveness as a power enabling man to keep the law and acquire merit. He said that, when God crowns our merits, He crowns His own gifts. This grace is conveyed to man through the sacraments; but Aquinas farther connected sacramental grace with Christ's satisfaction and merit. Anselm had taught that Christ by His satisfaction and merit obtains for men the remission of sins and life eternal.

Aquinas remodels this doctrine, and says that Christ's satisfaction and merit obtain for us the grace which not only blots out past sin, but also enables us to merit salvation. Not salvation itself, but the grace that makes merit possible, is thus the fruit of Christ's passion and death. This grace Christ Himself bestows through the sacraments of the Church. The sacrament of penance assures a further forgiveness after baptism. The life of the Christian is one of a perpetual renewal and increase of grace.

If we compare this entire view of what Christ does with that of the Greek Church, we see that there is a real attempt to pass beyond mere legalism by representing Christianity as a religion of grace. But the medieval compromise between law and grace is unsatisfactory, because it is so external. The Christian, though aided by sacramental grace, remains still under the law, and must merit salvation. If we ask how grace moves the will to good, there is no answer except that a supernatural habit of acting rightly is imparted through the sacraments. Thus in the end there is an uneasy shifting from legalism to pure supernaturalism and back again, which is altogether a very imperfect substitute for the experientialism which makes good action in the Christian so naturally explicable: we love, not by straining to keep the law, nor yet because a supernatural habit of love has been imparted to us, but simply because God first loved us.

Protestantism sought to reshape the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction and merit, so as to allow for a better

understanding of the Divine grace. Luther conceived grace as the free favour of God, which justifies the sinner who trusts only in Him and not in his own merits.

The old Protestant theology then remodelled the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction and merit, so as to form a basis for this doctrine of justifying grace. It abandoned the analogy of private law which had mainly guided the schoolmen from Anselm onwards, and utilized instead his other analogy taken from public law. God is not to be thought of as an offended party who requires personal satisfaction. He is the Judge, who must execute the law. Accordingly, the satisfaction made by Christ was held to be partly the rigorous execution of the sentence of the law upon Him, as the substitute for guilty sinners—this was His passive obedience: partly it was the vicarious performance by Him of the duties enjoined upon man by the law—this was His active obedience. The two parts of Christ's obedience, active and passive, together constituted His merit, the reward of which from God was justification and eternal life bestowed upon all who trust in the Divine grace.

This theory of Christ's satisfaction and merit formed the hard core of the great Protestant scholastic doctrine of His threefold office, as Prophet, Priest, and King. It constituted the doctrine of Christ's sacrifice, which was included under the Priestly office together with the doctrine of His heavenly intercession, in which He pleads His merit before God. The other parts of Christ's whole work lie in His Prophetic and Kingly offices. As Prophet,

Christ preaches the gospel of justifying grace and life eternal, both personally and through His ministers. As King, He makes the preaching of the gospel effective by His Divine power in the salvation of believers.

The Protestant doctrine of Christ's satisfaction and merit still belongs to the Latin type; but the difference from medievalism is very great. The insertion of the doctrine into the complete scheme of the threefold office essentially modifies its character. The notion of sacramental grace ceases to be the necessary supplement of the doctrine of satisfaction and merit: in place of the sacrament stands the gospel: the most consistent Protestantism understands the sacrament simply as another form of the gospel. A simple supernaturalism still lingers in the doctrine of the Kingly office; but the doctrine of the Prophetic office is experiential. The whole doctrine looks towards Christ as He is vested with the gospel of justifying grace and life eternal.

Nevertheless, there are serious faults in the Old Protestant doctrine in spite of these improvements. In the first place, the transference of the matter of Christ's satisfaction from the injured party to the criminal judge makes the admission of a satisfaction more difficult. A private person may accept amends; but a criminal judge must strictly administer the law which demands the punishment of the sinner.

Even if this defect be overlooked, another becomes apparent. The question of the scope of Christ's satisfaction became acute in the Protestant Churches. It had

been disputed in the Middle Ages, whether Christ made satisfaction for all men or only for the elect; but the question was simply for whom the Injured Party chose to admit the satisfaction. But now, if satisfaction is to be made to a strict penal justice, the rigid logic of the situation requires that it should be the equivalent only of the punishment of those actually saved: otherwise Christ would have suffered for some in vain and unjustly. The Calvinists accordingly maintained that Christ died only for the elect: if the Lutherans and Arminians taught that He made satisfaction for all men, their doctrine did more honour to their hearts than to their heads. The strict logic of the doctrine led to a most unsatisfactory limitation of the gospel of grace.

Finally, there is a deep cleft in the orthodox Protestant doctrine between the legalism that governs the theory of satisfaction and merit and the doctrine of grace in which it issues. Law and grace cannot be united by any such external method.

Protestantism follows St. Paul in representing the Christian as freed from the law and removed from all question of merit, being justified by faith alone. But if the scheme of law, merit, and reward is no longer allowed to govern Christian ethics, how can it reasonably be the standard in judging of the work of Christ? In the end, the abrogation of the legal scheme for Christian ethics must lead to its exclusion from Christian theology. Christian theology and Christian ethics cannot work on contrary principles.

The modification of the doctrine of satisfaction introduced by Grotius does not really remove the difficulties inherent in the notion. The Protestant theology had taken the matter of satisfaction away from the judgement of the offended party, and had made it the affair of the criminal judge: Grotius says that neither of these modes of treatment is right. God is to be regarded in this concern, neither as the Injured Party, nor yet as the Judge, but as the Governor of the Universe. Satisfaction is to be explained, not from principles of law, but from those of government. In this way Grotius seeks to prove the necessity of the satisfaction made by Christ, and yet to avoid all difficulties about an exact equivalence between the punishment of sinners and the satisfaction made instead of it. A governor, says Grotius, cannot fitly proclaim an amnesty for past offences, unless at the same time he secures the majesty of the law against contempt on account of the apparent neglect of its sanctions. Christ, therefore, voluntarily underwent the death of the Cross in order that there might be no doubt as to how God regards sin. In Him God has set up an example of the treatment of sinners, in order that pardon may be possible without harm to the Divine government of the Universe. He can thus publish a general amnesty for past offences; while, as there is no strict equivalence involved in the satisfaction, He can rightly attach an extra condition to the actual exercise of pardon. The condition which He attaches is that of faith in Christ.

The scheme of Grotius undoubtedly avoids some of

the difficulties of the doctrine of strict satisfaction, but it leaves in their place one difficulty which is quite enough to ruin the theory. A Governor who inflicts suffering on the innocent as a mere matter of policy is an unjust Governor: God cannot be thought of as so doing.

The foregoing criticisms of the Latin theory, alike in its medieval, its Orthodox Protestant, and its Grotian form, lead to the conclusion that this type of doctrine is no more successful than the Greek theology in establishing a firm basis for the doctrine of the Atonement. We must, however, face the undoubted fact, that it starts, especially in its orthodox Protestant form from very definite New Testament beginnings. There are many passages in the New Testament which speak of Christ's death as a sacrifice, and as a ransom; there are many others which contrast in a general way the sufferings and death of Christ with their fruit in the salvation of men, weighing one against the other. There is above all the dominance of Isaiah liii in New Testament thought, with its doctrine of the vicarious suffering of the Servant. It cannot be said that any of these passages or all of them together amount to a doctrine of Christ's satisfaction and merit, either in its Anselmic, its Orthodox Protestant, or its Grotian form. The Old Testament idea of sacrifice, whether as gift or as communion feast, does not square with any of these doctrines. Neither do we find any of them even in St. Paul. The underlying sense of the love of God appears to keep him, like the other New Testament writers, from formulating a precisely legal doctrine

of the Atonement. Yet the approach to a legal doctrine in some places is very near, and it was inevitable that the attempt to formulate it should be made. What are we to say of the theory of satisfaction and merit as an interpretation of Scripture?

If the object of theology were simply to gather up the different statements of Scripture into some kind of compendious scheme, without regard to the question how the different parts fit together, then the Old Protestant theology may be said to have succeeded above all other forms of doctrine in achieving the task. Calvin had reason on his side when he put forward his *Institutes* as a Key to Holy Scripture. The great works of the Protestant Scholastics had even greater claim to be such. There was practically nothing in either Testament which did not come within the sweep of their theology.

Nevertheless, the Protestant theology only interpreted the Bible by a series of contradictions. It is the idea of satisfaction itself which is incompatible not merely with the goodness, but also with the justice of God. That the innocent should suffer vicariously for the guilty in the course of the Divine Providence is one thing. It is altogether another that God should be considered as the Judge, who transfers the penalties of sin to the innocent, or demands satisfaction from the innocent before the guilty can be forgiven.

The farther we go with the argument, the more hopeless the contradictions become, the confusion only increases. Neither is the panacea suggested by the Arminian



theologian Limborch of any avail. He proposed that we should go back to the express words of Scripture about sacrifice and ransom, and the like, strictly avoiding the reading into them of later interpretations such as satisfaction and merit, or at least using these only so far as they could be elucidated directly from Scripture. But such a procedure is altogether unsatisfactory. The intended reserve cannot be maintained. As long as there is no real alteration in the theological standpoint the definite ideas inevitably absorb the looser statements into themselves, as in Joseph's dream the lean kine ate up the full-fed animals. Bad money, says the proverb, drives out good.

We have already rejected in the first lecture the attempt to found theology upon the Divine Sovereignty. It was agreed that Anselm was absolutely right in saying that a God who acts arbitrarily is not the Christian God. But a word or two must be said now about the uses to which the principle of Sovereignty has been put in special reference to the Atonement.

One use has been to justify any and every traditional idea by its means. Another has been to discourage any examination of the subject on the ground that it is a mystery. The former of these methods is as old as Duns Scotus and as new at Otto and Brunner. Duns Scotus riddled the Anselmic doctrine of satisfaction and merit with a criticism whose acuteness has never been surpassed; after which he proposed to maintain the whole doctrine on no rational basis, but simply on the ground of the arbitrary will of God.

A somewhat different use of the principle is made by Otto, who justifies the idea of expiation by an appeal to the primitive instinct that prostrates man before the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.<sup>1</sup> After all, Otto does but justify philosophically what a great many people think. They imagine that to show that an idea or practice has its roots in primitive feeling is enough to prove it as permanently guaranteed to the end of time. They invoke what are called the deep-rooted instincts of humanity, in order to naturalize within Christianity all that the comparative study of religion has taught us about ideas of expiation, and of the mysterious potency of blood to cleanse and purify. But the fact that ideas and practices are primitive is no warrant for their permanent retention: it is quite the contrary, witness the attitude of the Hebrew prophets to the ritual of the earlier national religion. And, to return to Otto and his philosophy of religion, the justification of what is primitive in religion from the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* means in reality the abandonment of the ground of Christianity as a religion of revelation. God is Light, and there is in Him no darkness at all. The mystery of the gospel is not a dark night in which all kinds of obscure ideas and practices can find cover: it is the marvel of the Divine love, which indeed transcends all human imagination concerning God, but which when made manifest in Christ is self-evidencing by its own power. There must be a great transformation of all primitive instincts, ideas, and practices before they

<sup>1</sup> *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 175.

can be at home in that searching light. The baptism into Christ which ethnic ideas have to undergo is a baptism by fire. The sun burns as well as reveals and warms.

Brunner's use of the supernaturalist principle includes both that of Duns Scotus and Otto. He forgets that a principle that explains everything, really explains nothing; and he uses the Divine Sovereignty to justify alike primitive ideas of expiation, if they happen to be in the Bible, Greek notions of redemption and recapitulation, and Latin ideas of satisfaction, both in the Anselmic form of satisfaction to a person for the injury of honour and in the Orthodox Protestant form of satisfaction to criminal justice. Brunner's book *The Mediator*<sup>1</sup> presents us with all these ideas in succession, a multitude of shifting forms with the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty in reserve to cover up all the gaps in the argument. *The Mediator* is a long book, but the verdict upon it must be *multa, sed non multum*. Ossa is heaped upon Pelion, and gigantic efforts are made to reach the Divine and heavenly truth; but heaven remains as far off at the end as it was at the beginning. Brunner says: *Gott kann nur durch Gott erkannt werden*; God can only be known by Divine revelation.<sup>2</sup> That is true. But then God is to be seen where He is really revealed, not in a darkness broken from time to time by lightning flashes which rather blind than illuminate, but in the full daylight of the gospel of His love shining in Jesus.

The second form in which the notion of God's Sove-

reignty is used in relation to the doctrine of the Atonement is different. It is a form which has been very popular in recent years. The Atonement, it is said, is a fact but a mystery. Christ by His death secures for us the forgiveness of sins: we know that by experience. But how He does it, we cannot tell; nor is it any use to inquire.

This *asylum ignorantiae* can never be a satisfactory refuge from doubt as to the value and the reality of the Atonement. What do we mean by saying that we have experience of forgiveness through Christ without understanding how or why? There can be no experience of reconciliation with God apart from some understanding of His nature and His ways. A supposed reconciliation with an inscrutable power brings as much peace of mind with it as encamping on the slopes of a volcano, which was in a state of eruption yesterday, and may be again to-morrow.

The final objection, therefore, to founding a doctrine of the Atonement upon the sheer sovereignty of God is that it assures no certainty of forgiveness to the repentant sinner, it guarantees no unbroken communion with God. How indeed can there be communion, where there is no moral relation? We stand at the point of Caliban's reflections upon the caprices of Setebos:

Thinketh, such shows nor right nor wrong in Him,  
Nor kind, nor cruel: He is strong and Lord.  
Am strong myself compared to yonder crabs  
That march now from the mountain to the sea;  
Let twenty pass, and stone the twenty-first,

Loving not, hating not, just choosing so.  
Say, the first straggler that boasts purple spots  
Shall join the file, one pincer twisted off;  
Say, this bruised fellow shall receive a worm,  
And two worms he whose nippers end in red:  
As it likes me each time, I do: so He.

Truly we do not exalt God by thinking to lift Him above good and evil. There is a 'vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself'. Such is the ambition of the theologians who cry up the transcendence of God, till all moral relation between Him and us is lost. A king may be greater than a father in power; but what is that, if he be less in moral majesty? The Greatest is One whose power serves His love.

There is still the theory of the Atonement, which Anselm rejected as insubstantial, but which Abelard rescued from this despitte and made the head-stone of the corner. It is the doctrine that Christ died to reveal the love of God, and thereby to kindle our hearts to an answering love. Our programme demands that we should see whether every true thought about the Atonement, Biblical, historical, philosophical, theological, cannot be based upon this principle. It is not enough to propose it as the head-stone of the corner: the whole doctrine in all its different parts must be built upon it. That is the work that lies before us in the following lectures. If it is to be satisfactorily done, it will not have to be too narrowly limited to what is generally understood by the doctrine of the Atonement. It will involve the outlines of a system

in which God, man and sin, the world, Christ, the Church and the sacraments, faith, hope, and love all find their place. It is not intended, of course, to work out a complete doctrine on all these points; but without an elementary understanding about them, a doctrine of the Atonement is unintelligible. How can it be otherwise? Reconciliation with God through Christ is the very essence of the Christian religion: it is an essence that pervades every part as a plan pervades a whole structure. We can only see what the Atonement means, when the whole structure of Christian theology is before us, at least in outline. It may be thought by some that I am extending the borders of my subject too widely, and talking about anything and everything but the Atonement itself. All that I have to say in answer to this objection, is that this is the only way in which the experiential theory of the Atonement can be proved and justified. The principle of the revelation of God in Christ must show itself able to act as a substantial basis for all Christian theology. It must put us at a point where we can see light on all the problems raised by the Christian religion.

What then is the course to be adopted in the following lectures? We must follow the method laid down in the first lecture. Our dogmatic first principle must be exhibited as an apologetic first principle also. We must establish the Love of God revealed in Christ as a metaphysical principle which can bear the weight of any subsequent superstructure. We shall accordingly try to show that reflection upon the universe and man's place in

it leads us to a doctrine of God which makes religious experience natural; while it further provides us with the principle of a critique of religious experience, which prepares us to find in Jesus Christ the self-evidencing revelation of God. We shall try to establish metaphysically that central standpoint from which all that the Bible says of God is to be understood: especially, we shall use our result to make it clear how the Divine Sovereignty and the Divine Righteousness are to be understood through the Divine Love; and what is the meaning of that great first point of the Gospel, the Kingdom of God.

We shall go on to explain the nature of Revelation through Christ, rejecting absolutely the too common intellectualistic conception of revelation, and showing how revelation promotes insight into the character of God and quickens faith, hope, and love. This will help us to establish the true meaning of the supernatural in Christianity, and the real nature of the grace of which the Church and the Sacraments are the vehicles.

These things will occupy the fifth and sixth lectures: in the seventh we shall come to the great question of the forgiveness of sins, studying it in the light of the principles now firmly established. It is only from the standpoint of the Divine love revealed in Christ that sin can be truly understood and its guilt rightly estimated. From the same standpoint we shall be able to see the proper nature of forgiveness, and to consider its full effect upon the forgiven sinner. That will bring us to the discussion of the Mediatorship of Christ in forgiveness: it will be

shown how the revelation of the Divine love in Him makes the sinner forgivable by awakening penitence and trust. This further insight into the ways of God will help us to a new and richer comprehension of the Church and the Sacraments as 'full of the forgiveness of sins'.

All this is in conscious following of Anselm's method in fixing a metaphysical basis for theology and constructing the details of theory upon it. The same method finally requires us to go back upon the theories that have been criticized in the present lecture, to see how far they are capable of restatement. The last lecture, therefore, will return upon the older theories of the Atonement, considering at the same time some modern renewals of them. We shall endeavour to prove that all that is of real value in these great theories can be conserved upon the experiential basis. The last word of all will be to commend the experiential doctrine of the Atonement as furnishing an unsurpassable gospel for the modern preacher.



## LECTURE V

### OUTLINE OF A METAPHYSIC OF CHRISTIANITY

IN the first lecture Theology was defined to be the statement of Christian doctrine as truth and this definition was shown to imply that its fundamental work is always the unification of Authority and Reason. It was asserted that the modern reference to religious experience was simply our particular way of bringing Authority and Reason together under conditions more difficult than those which faced earlier generations.

The second, third, and fourth lectures worked at the task of unifying Authority and Reason from the side of Authority: Reason was employed in the form of criticism, analysing and sifting the Christian tradition, Biblical and ecclesiastical. Now we go to work from the side of Reason, showing how the positive contribution of Christianity unites with the rest of our knowledge in a first principle at once Christian and rational in the highest sense of the word. The duty of the present lecture is in fact to outline a Christian metaphysic.

What do we mean by Reason in this context? It is much more than formal logic: we mean in the end the total sum of what is regarded as rational in the concrete. We are concerned with the fundamental lines that are driven through the universe in the endeavour to map it out and understand its inner relations.

Accordingly, though our problem coincides formally with that of Anselm in the *Cur Deus Homo*, in concrete actuality it is different from his. The map of the universe has expanded since the early Middle Ages; and the problem of bringing Authority and Reason together has become more complicated than it was for Anselm.

Nevertheless, the solution of the modern problem is after all a modification and development of the fundamental principles of the *Cur Deus Homo*. They are in part open to criticism, but what remains can be re-shaped so as to bear the whole weight of Christian theology.

Let us recall the principles which Anselm regarded as the sure groundwork of his rational universe. There were three in all. One was the metaphysical inviolability of God: nothing that man does can ultimately affect or change Him. Another was the notion of God as the just Ruler of the Universe, who cannot let sin go unpunished. The third was the idea of God as an offended party, who requires satisfaction for an injury to his honour. Anselm identifies these three positions quite uncritically with one another. It is clear that they are really inconsistent.

It is not merely that the two legal schemes are incompatible. That is true. The public or criminal justice, which must punish the offender, is quite distinct from and is opposed to the private law, which leaves it to the arbitrament of the injured party, whether he will demand satisfaction or not. But, beyond this, neither of the legal schemes is compatible with the metaphysical inviolability or unchangeableness of God, if that is identified, as it is by

Anselm, with God's original purpose to create man for beatitude. Anselm makes this identification as well as the identification with law; and it is clear that of these different identifications, that with the original Divine purpose must be regarded as having priority. Nothing can come before God's original purpose. Now, the necessity of punishment, which is also deduced from the inviolability of God, is regarded as preventing the execution of the Divine purpose. Thus we have the unchangeableness of God identified with two opposite things, which is impossible. We have therefore to say that criminal justice cannot be identified with the Divine unchangeableness. It is still more impossible to identify the scheme of private law with the Divine unchangeableness. That scheme makes the demand for satisfaction to rest entirely upon the absolute arbitrament of the injured party; but such an arbitrament is the very opposite of an unchanging purpose. Thus, if the metaphysical unchangeableness of God is one with His original purpose to create man for beatitude, neither legal system can be grounded in the Divine unchangeableness. Law in every form belongs to the sphere of the temporal and changeable: to borrow a phrase from St. Paul, 'the law came in between' the original purpose of God and its execution.<sup>1</sup>

Anselm's triadic scheme must be abandoned. The question rises: if we remove the legal accretion from the notion of an unchanging Divine purpose, can that be so

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 20. Weizsäcker translates, 'Das Gesetz ist aber dazwischen hineingekommen'. Sanday and Headlam comment, 'St Paul regarded Law as a "parenthesis" in the Divine plan'.

construed as to yield a metaphysical basis for Christian theology? The answer is that it can; only the metaphysic established will be not a metaphysic of Law, but one of Love. Our object now is to show that Reason leads us to the conclusion that the love of God is the foundation of the universe.

In this research we can go quite a long way with Anselm. That great thinker laid the firm foundation of a Christian metaphysic in the form of the ontological argument. The ontological argument is simply the rational form of the fundamental Christian conviction concerning God. Hegel discerningly remarked that it was the one argument for the Divine existence peculiar to Christianity. It will be remembered that Anselm approaches it through the invocation of God and meditation upon the goodness.

It will be best to go back to his original statement, and work up from that to the modification of the argument necessary to-day in view of the changed philosophical situation. We shall examine, first, the ontological argument itself as stated in the *Proslogion*, and then go on to amplify the meaning of this abstract statement by a reference to the *Monologium*.

The statement in the *Proslogion*, so familiar to all students of philosophy, is indeed highly abstract. That than which there is nothing greater must exist; it is a contradiction in terms to speak of the greatest possible and omit existence. Anselm alternatively speaks of the best possible, and says that the best possible must exist. The greatest and the best coalesce together in his mind.

The *Monologium* develops what is implied by the ontological argument in a more concrete form. The proof implies the existence of God as a Spirit, intelligent, unchangeable, omnipotent, good, merciful, just, true, and blessed. In all these things, says the great schoolman, being is better than non-being. Therefore, since the best possible must exist, God in all the fullness of these glorious attributes must exist. This is Anselm's justification by reason of the Christian conception of God.

The ontological argument is at bottom an expression of the finite reason's confidence in Reason itself. It identifies Reason with the Good and believes in its power over existence. The principle of the ontological argument is the same as that of Browning's well-known line from *Abt Vogler*:

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before.

What is the greatest and best possible? It is the Ideal of Reason, conceived as the unity of all rational principles. A Reason that despairs of itself, or of the realization of its principles, is a pale and ineffectual angel beating its wings upon the void. In the ontological argument Reason spreads strong wings and takes all existence for its province. It is meant that there is no form of existence that is not subject to the power of Reason, that cannot be rationally interpreted and rationally controlled. All science, all morals, and all philosophy are based on this confidence.

The control of the universe by Absolute Reason is only

another way of expressing the dependence of the universe upon God. In the ontological argument the finite reason elevates itself to the Divine point of view. It realizes its own continuity with the Reason that is Divine. 'Res Dei ratio,' says Tertullian. The universe was created by the Logos, says the Fourth Gospel.

The question that rises here in view of later philosophical developments is how reason comes to that content which Anselm develops as spirit, goodness, blessedness, and so on. It is clear that we draw it in some way or other from experience, outer and inner, from external nature and the nature of our own minds. Anselm inherited from Augustine a Neoplatonic philosophy which had no independent interest apart from theology, but viewed the universe as a symbolism, which in every part, though in different degrees, led up to God.

The great difference in the modern philosophical position from that of Augustine and Anselm is its recognition of an independent science of nature, as an object or system of objects of disinterested knowledge. The 'greater' and the 'better', which were all one for Anselm, have become distinct from one another. There is the world of nature on the one hand and the world of values on the other; and whatever be the case with the world of values, the world of nature as the sphere of objective science detains us from that immediate elevation to God, which was so easy for Anselm. It unfolds itself in an infinite expanse for study and research, from which the thought of God seems altogether remote. 'Sire, I had no

need of that hypothesis,' said Laplace, the author of the *Mécanique Céleste*, to the Emperor Napoleon, in reply to the question why the name of God did not appear in his book.

Nevertheless, this change in the philosophical situation only requires a further articulation of the ontological argument to meet it. The argument has to be stated in a more complex form. It may sound paradoxical to assert that the work has been done in two stages by St. Thomas Aquinas and Kant, both of whom formally rejected the ontological argument. Yet, if we look at the spirit of their systems, the assertion reveals itself as the indubitable truth. Each, taken as a whole, is a new form of the ontological argument. A few words on St. Thomas Aquinas will prepare the way for the understanding of Kant in this sense.

St. Thomas dismissed the ontological argument on the ground that an idea can never guarantee its own reality. But it is not always remembered that he held that in truth God's essence involves His existence, that is, the idea of God actually does imply His reality; only that we, who have to start from the information of the senses, are not in a position to see this truth immediately. The ontological argument is really sound, but the process of elevation to it must be gradual. Aquinas had learned from Aristotle to recognize an independent science of nature; but he was able, following his master, to connect God with nature by the principles of Efficient and Final Causality: the former leads to God as the First Cause of

the Universe, the latter to God as its Supreme Good. Instead of rising at once from the universe to the God whose Idea involves His existence, we have to follow out long chains of causation and so arrive ultimately at the goal. Moreover, the 'greater' is now distinct from the 'better': the one argument has divided into two, one to the First Cause, than which there is nothing greater, the other to the Supreme Good, than which there is nothing better. At long last the two arguments coalesce, because at bottom being and goodness are one. All that truly is, is good. With this identification of being and goodness, accepted from Augustine, St. Thomas restores himself ultimately to the Anselmic unity of the greatest and the best. That than which there is nothing greater is also that than which there is nothing better. Each is an aspect of God, whose essence is His existence. We see that the theology of St. Thomas as a whole, in spite of his formal disapproval of the ontological argument, in reality is inspired by it. The argument has been more articulated: that is all.

The study of a less complex articulation of the ontological argument prepares us to recognize a fuller and more complex articulation of it in the Kantian Critiques, in spite of all appearances to the contrary. The reason for the new complexity is to be found in the increasing independence of Natural Science, and the widening of the gap between Nature and God. By the time of Kant Aristotelian science, which concerned itself principally with the qualities of things, had given way to Newtonian science, which



was interested exclusively in their measurable aspects. The 'greater' is becoming still more widely divided from the 'better'.

Kant deals with the problem of the infinitely great in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, reserving the problem of the absolutely good for the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The modern physicist Planck has expressed the principle of Newtonian science in the form: 'What is measurable, that is real.' We are come a long way from Anselm and very far from Aquinas. If what is measurable is the only real, the way to God seems closed. The tracing of effects back to their causes will never lead us to anything but something measurable; while in a world where every effect is the measurable result of a cause, the notion of a purpose seems altogether without place. This was in essence Kant's argument in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, concerning which Heine said that it was the sword with which Theism was decapitated in Germany. Kant, he declared, was a greater man than Robespierre: Robespierre did but behead a King, Kant had made an end of God.

Heine's bitter mockery seems at first sight only too well grounded. If what is real in the Universe is what can be measured, there is no way to God. All that is left is Space and Time, Matter and Motion.

I go forward, but He is not there;  
And backward, but I cannot perceive Him.

Yet a second reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* produces a different impression. The final word is not

that nothing is real except the measurable: it is that nothing is real unless it is immanently rational. The *Critique* exhibits Nature as ever more and more rational, the more we look into it. The very science of measurement is a rational science: is not Mathematics indeed the most obvious pattern and standard of what we mean by Pure Reason? Yet the mathematical aspect of Nature does not exhaust its rationality: it is rational in still more complex and subtle ways. Substance and Cause which we find everywhere in nature are themselves rational concepts: it is Reason that informs us of their meaning and discerns their applications.

Moreover, while the mathematical aspect of the world, as it is presented to us, is primary, it is not the only aspect to be considered. There is a dynamical aspect as well as a mathematical aspect; in its dynamical aspect the world presents to us that which escapes all measurement, and which only finds a proper explanation in the notion of an intelligible or free causality. The calculable series which the world exhibits has a side which is conceptually inexplicable by any calculation. But this free causality still works rationally: the issue of this further control of experience is an intelligible, though not calculable order, whose principles are the homogeneity, the specification, and the continuity of forms. The homogeneity of forms means that what is diverse is arranged in forms of great generality. The specification of forms signifies that these forms of wide generality are specified again in forms of more particularity. Finally, the continuity of forms im-

ports that the systematic unity of the whole is completed by a law of affinity, which prescribes a gradual transition from one species to another by the continuous increase of diversity.

In a word, Nature in the end is amenable to Reason: it exhibits itself as possessing a rational structure which, with every advance of science, becomes clearer and more intelligible. What at first appears as brute fact, turns out after all to be rational. That is the underlying principle of all science, with its doctrine of the uniformity, or rather the unity of nature. No doubt Kant says that the principles which determine a hierarchy of forms are regulative rather than constitutive. He means that they determine our thinking about Nature rather than Nature itself, while the relations of space and time and causality determine Nature itself. But inasmuch as Science can no more do without the one set of principles than the other, the distinction seems, and in fact is, evanescent.

The final issue of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as a whole is that we approach, even if asymptotically, to the conception of Nature as rational through and through. Instead of staying still at Planck's dictum, what is measurable, that is real, we move by gradual stages in the direction of the saying of Hegel, 'The rational is the real and the real is the rational.' The *Critique of Pure Reason* no doubt disallows the ontological argument, just as it disallows the cosmological and the teleological arguments: it says that all the ideas in the world can never of themselves establish one little fact. Nevertheless, taken alto-

gether, the *Critique* is a new form of the ontological argument: it affirms ever increasingly from the side of the fact its permeation by Reason. At the end of the asymptotic approach is Anselm's conception of the unity of Reason and Fact. If Reason can so penetrate the apparently brute fact, then the fact cannot be really independent of Reason. Its origination from Reason is surely implied.

The *Critique of Practical Reason* still further articulates the ontological argument. It deals, not with that than which no greater can be thought, but with what for Anselm was an alternative, that than which nothing better can be thought. In Kant's philosophy, it is not an alternative that is considered, but an advance that is made, when we pass from the study of Nature to that of the Highest Good.

Kant finds a new starting-point for the elevation of the mind to God in the indubitable certainty of the moral law as a universal principle of reason. It is (to use Oman's terminology) Reason's own self-legislation according to its own insight in the world of its own self-determination. Nothing is more certain than that I ought to do what Reason reveals as my duty, whatever may be the inducements to act otherwise arising from the instincts that bind me to the world of nature. It was in this sense that Kant praised the good will as the only absolute good in the world.

But Kant recognized that while the good will might be the supreme good it was not the complete good. The good will is unconditionally good, and is the condition

without which nothing else can be good; but there is a subordinate good which must be included to complete the notion of the highest good as the object of desire of a rational finite being. This subordinate good may be summed up as happiness. It cannot be reasonable that the natural desire for happiness should be frustrated, though it must never be made an end in itself.

The problem is how we can expect happiness to follow upon goodness. Nature appears to have no concern either for goodness or for happiness. The same Reason that recognizes duty certainly recognizes our freedom to fulfil duty; but for the attainment of happiness, man seems to be dependent upon nature. The only way in which virtue and happiness can be brought to coincide, is that they should be linked together by the order of the universe itself, which must be imposed by a Rational Will, which is the Omnipotent Free Cause of Nature. The possibility of the highest good in the sense of the best possible world, the sum of all good, depends upon the existence of a highest original good, which is the existence of God. This best possible world will be a Kingdom of God, in which the good will in each individual subject of this sovereignty will find its meed of happiness, not by each man seeking it selfishly for himself, but his by making the Kingdom itself the object of desire in obedience to the call of duty.

The essence of Kant's argument is the principle that morality, which is in its proper character so absolutely independent of the order of nature, yet after all has to be

realized in the natural order. The question how virtue can be synthesized with happiness is only a part of the wider and deeper question, how the moral order can be synthesized with the natural order. It is useless talking about virtue, if the world is such that in it virtue is impossible. If the indifference of nature to morals means that moral action is impossible, the moral law is an illusion. If, on the other hand, the moral law is not an illusion, moral action within nature must be possible. This is a purely rational argument; but it receives empirical confirmation, in so far as actually the good life has been lived and still is lived in the world. Who can regard history and say that morality is an illusion? Whatever failures, iniquities, and vices history exhibits, there is a core of high endeavour, noble action, gallant self-sacrifice that claims our homage. We shall not say that the virtues of the heathen are splendid vices. Virtue is a jewel that shines by its own intrinsic light and proclaims its own true value. The denial of this fact is simply the ignorance of the historical observer.

To sum up, the possibility, and still more the actuality, of morality means the actuality of God. The world is not one in which morality is impossible: therefore God exists. There is a Good Will at the heart of things. That is the position to which, pursuing the way opened by Kant, we are ultimately led. It is the restatement of the theology of Anselm and Aquinas in the form of a metaphysic of the Good Will. The *Critique of Pure Reason* shows the actual control of Nature by Reason, and the *Critique of Practical*

*Reason*, pointing on to a still completer control, reveals the centre of the whole rational scheme of the Universe as the Good Will, original and supreme.

When Kant insists on the primacy of the Practical Reason, what is this but a new articulation of the ontological argument? The way is shown more clearly to the truth that Ultimate Reality is one with Reason. Nature indeed only leads up to this great truth, but Morality convincingly demonstrates it. What is implied is a metaphysic which not only distinguishes between persons and things, but also, this distinction being made, exhibits Ultimate Reality as Personal. It is true that Anselm also called Ultimate Reality by the name of Spirit; but Kant enables us to reach a more definite description of the Absolute as Personal Good Will.

The two great *Critiques* amount together to the creation of a new metaphysic. Kant indeed spoke in the *Critique of Pure Reason* of the abolition of metaphysic as the great aim of his work; and he regarded the doctrine of God in the *Critique of Practical Reason* as moral faith, not as metaphysical knowledge. In reality the great philosopher has founded a new metaphysic; or rather has established the old metaphysic of Anselm and Aquinas upon new lines. It is as impossible to get away from metaphysic as it is to escape from one's own shadow. The metaphysic that is dismissed at one door, returns by another. Meyerson rightly says: 'Man makes metaphysic as he breathes, without willing to do so, and above all for the greater part of the time without any doubt of it.' There are,

however, moments in the history of humanity, when doubt of a traditional form of metaphysic arises; but it is only that a new form of metaphysic may come into being. Kant's philosophy represents one of these moments.

The Kantian metaphysic still stands as the basis of modern Christian theology. It is, taken altogether, a very highly articulated form of the ontological argument, such as has been made necessary by the complicated development of knowledge in our times. Nothing has happened since Kant materially to alter the value of his arguments. The science of Einstein and Heisenberg has refined upon that of Newton, but has not affected the philosophical aspect of mathematics as a science of measurement.

On the other hand, Kant's dynamistic view of Nature has received new support, and has been restated in a more far-reaching form as a doctrine of emergent evolution, which reminds us that even from the side of theory we can never wholly represent the actual world in terms of mathematical physics. A great deal that is important slips through the net of mathematical relations. It may be possible to reduce the universe from a mathematical point of view to electrons, protons, and radiation. But we still have to explain why different numerical combinations of electrons and protons should produce the various chemical elements which are so qualitatively diverse; why these elements, again, should combine in various proportions to form compounds qualitatively different from them and from each other; why from these compounds the whole variety of the universe should proceed; why some com-



binations should form the basis of life, vegetable, animal, and human; why human life should develop as it does in all the variety and wonder of the story of man upon the earth; why finally states and civilizations, heroes and prophets, should appear in the history of human progress. The only apparent explanation of all these things is teleological. The doctrine of emergent evolution is simply a new teleology working within the scheme of the modern scientific view of nature.

It is important to observe, however, that as we include man within nature, we are carried over insensibly to the moral point of view. We pass from the domain of the *Critique of Pure Reason* to that of the *Critique of Practical Reason*. The actual teleology of nature is supplemented by a moral teleology that carries us beyond the known history, either of the universe, or of mankind. The moral good reveals itself as the destined end of the whole process that leads up to man. Space, time, electrons, protons, the chemical elements, inorganic nature, the organic world, man himself, all take their places as stages in the ladder of ascent whose top is the Kingdom of God.

It is admittedly a great advantage to consider the actual progress towards the Divine Kingdom existing in the world. The *a priori* argument that demands the control of nature by Reason receives valuable confirmation, when we see what Reason has already done. Yet in the end it is reverence for the Good itself and confidence in its power, that must rid us of the many doubts which nature suggests to the Theist.

It may be said, for example, that we only know of moral developments on this small planet, which is less than nothing in a Universe, where galactic system follows upon galactic system in the unimaginable depths of space. The reply is that moral values outweigh galactic systems in the scale of being. As Anselm says, I must not cast one look contrary to the will of God to preserve the whole universe. Or as Browning expresses it:

The loving worm within its clod  
Were diviner than a loveless god  
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.

Another objection is that we must not argue from moral progress, since civilizations rise and fall, and progress is annihilated. The nineteenth century believed in progress: but can we believe in progress after the Great War? The century of hope has been succeeded by the century of disillusionment: men now regard the Victorians as hopelessly sentimental and idealistic: realism is the order of the day.

When empirical confirmation gives out, there is still *a priori* reason, which can generate new empirical confirmation out of itself. The Good Will is an infinite energy, which only appears baffled to fight better: the positions of the *Critique of Practical Reason* still stand even after the Great War. When they are supported, as they should be, by a positive interpretation of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, they constitute with that help a map of the Universe, which exhibits it as a spiritual home for

Christianity. The philosophy of Kant is a *testimonium animae naturaliter Christianae*.

It only remains now to use the metaphysical basis we have attained for the solution of our special theological problem, the doctrine of the Atonement. The agreement of Authority and Reason which we seek is established, when we identify the Good Will, of which we have been speaking, with the Divine Love as it is revealed in Jesus Christ. That fixes the principle of the experiential doctrine of the Atonement as at the same time the basis of a Christian metaphysic.

Let it be observed that what is suggested is in direct pursuance of the line taken by Christian theology from the first, in so far as Christianity was declared to be the revelation of the Logos. The New Testament, starting from the actual historical facts of which we have a record in the Synoptic Gospels, reaches at its conclusion in the Fourth Gospel the great identification of Jesus with the Logos. That identification must still be the inspiring principle of Christian theology. The defect in its actual use has been an imperfect understanding of what was implied by the Logos.

The early Christian Apologists, who set the pattern for all later theology till the end of the eighteenth century, identified Reason with the knowledge of God, of his law, and of immortality as the reward of keeping it. Christianity was given the juristic bias, which we have noted in Anselm, by means of which Reason and the law of rewards and punishments were identified. The scheme of Divine

rewards and punishments was taken to be the rational content of Christianity. It is still so taken by Brunner, when he writes of the law in this sense. He says:

'The law, as the objective foundation of a spiritual existence, is the point of contact between the rational and the Christian knowledge of God. The law is the backbone, the framework, the granite foundation of the spiritual world.'<sup>1</sup>

It is not law, however, in the sense of a scheme of rewards and punishments, that is the foundation of the spiritual world. Law of this kind is quite distinct from the moral law, as the self-evidencing authority of the Good over us.

It was natural enough that Christianity at its first entrance into the great world should be identified with a juristic scheme. Jews, Greeks, and Romans in the first age of Christianity were dominated by a legal conception of the Divine world-order. It seemed an obvious presupposition from which to interpret Christianity; but its adoption by the Apologists and subsequent theologians after them meant the theological distortion of the Christian religion. What would not go into the legal scheme, tended to be viewed as the sheer supernatural. Our previous study of the Greek and medieval theories of the Atonement shows the prevalence of a legalism, upon which pure supernaturalism was grafted as an after-thought. The principle of the experiential doctrine of the Atonement remained outside the general theological scheme, and was but sporadically represented in theology: otherwise it manifested itself only in devotional literature,

<sup>1</sup> *Der Mittler*, p. 414.

such as St. Bernard's *Sermons on the Canticles*. With the advent of Protestantism the experiential doctrine of the Atonement found a place in the theological scheme as the doctrine of the Prophetic office; but legalism remained the basis in the doctrine of the Priestly office, and a pure supernaturalism in that of the Kingly office. The whole work of Christ was not understood from any one single centre. Ritschl quite rightly speaks of the Protestant orthodoxy as reflecting the Christian religion from a many-angled mirror.

The restatement of the ontological argument which we have discovered in the philosophy of Kant leads us to a metaphysic, neither of legalism nor of pure supernaturalism, but of an ethical supernaturalism. That than which nothing is greater and nothing is better is the Good Will, which because it is absolutely good, reason recognizes as the self-evidencing standard of human conduct. That will already reigns in the universe physical and moral, though in the one case its reign is only partly understood by us, and in the other it awaits complete recognition through the voluntary obedience of mankind.

This metaphysic of the Good Will, regnant in the universe, furnishes the required basis for Christian theology, when we identify the Good Will with the Love of God. It is not difficult to make this identification. The Good Will is concerned not only for the moral virtue but also for the happiness of men, the two in one synthesis, neither virtue without happiness, nor happiness without virtue. But a concern of this kind is exactly what we mean by

love. Love seeks to make others good and happy. Absolute love must seek to make them absolutely good and absolutely happy. We come back to the position of Anselm, who identified the Divine unchangeableness with the original purpose of God to bring men to eternal beatitude. Yet we come back with a difference. We see that beatitude must be taken to include goodness as well as happiness. But Anselm was right that immortality also must be included.

Kant, as is well known, made the freedom of the will and immortality the second and third postulates of morality, the existence of God being the first. I ought, therefore I can: that is his postulate of freedom. Since the moral ideal is infinite, I shall need infinite time to achieve it: that is his postulate of immortality.

In reality, these postulates of morality cannot be independent of the existence of God, as Kant seems to make them. I ought, therefore I can: yes, but in the Universe which is controlled by God. If God exists, we cannot make abstraction from His existence in estimating our freedom. If we are free, we are free in a world governed by the Divine Love.

Similarly with immortality: it is not enough to say that I need infinite time to achieve virtue. The Divine Love itself which is concerned to make me good is also concerned to make me happy, and both in absolute measure; which is the same thing as to say that the Divine Love is concerned with my eternal beatitude. If happiness depends on nature, the Divine Love must so control nature, as to

establish all the conditions of eternal beatitude. The ontological argument works out at long last into an eschatology. Truly, the lines of it are not very definite. We cannot tell what transformation of nature, which includes our own bodies, will be necessary to create the conditions of eternal beatitude. But it is clear that the establishment of the reign of God in the universe means more than a teleological process in history: somehow at last the end of the ways of God must be the

one far-off Divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves.

The natural death of the body cannot hinder that Divine event: the Kingdom of God must be a reign of eternal beatitude in which a transformed nature is the appropriate environment and instrument of the spirit.

Such a doctrine of God, freedom and immortality is the metaphysical basis of Christianity which we have been seeking: it is summed up in the one principle of the Divine Love.

What is to be said at the end of all this philosophy? *Non in dialecticâ complacuit Deo saluum facere populum suum.* No one was ever saved by the ontological argument. A great deal has been said about reason in the present lecture: some people will certainly think, too much. It is a matter of common knowledge that it is not reason, but emotion that is the spring of action. How are we to pass over from abstract argument, however useful and valuable it may be, to life and its concrete problems? How do we find God, not as an inference from the uni-

verse, not even as an inference from morality, but as a saving God? How does the Love that moves the sun and the stars touch our individual experience? This last is Luther's question: 'Wie kriege ich einen gnädigen Gott?'

The answer to all these questions can be stated in two words: *Per Christum*: Through Christ. But it will take a whole lecture to develop and elucidate their meaning. The principle involved is the principle of revelation; accordingly the next lecture will have as its subject, Revelation through Christ. That is the principle both of the experiential doctrine of the Atonement and of Christianity as a whole. We have been exploring in the present lecture the Metaphysical basis of Christianity; in the next lecture we shall deal with Christianity itself.



## LECTURE VI

### REVELATION THROUGH CHRIST

THE subject of the present lecture, as stated at the close of the last one, is Revelation through Christ. The order of the discussion takes us first to the matter of religious experience and then particularly to that of Christian experience.

That there is more than one type of experience was brought home to us by Kant's *Critiques*. The *Critique of Pure Reason* dealt with the conditions of theoretical experience: the *Critique of Practical Reason* with those of ethical experience. There was a break between them which had to be closed by the acceptance of God as the principle of their unification. Nature, the first object of theory, was found to point to God as its Free Cause: Ethics proved to yield a conception of His Being as the Good Will that governs Nature, and seeks the complete good of men. In this way God is reached as an inference from experience theoretical and practical. When we open the Bible we find a very different attitude towards God, which can be only described as a direct and immediate experience of His presence. It is in the Psalms above all that we come upon the most convincing expression of this experience. The Psalter is the language of a converse between God and the soul, in which the prevailing note is one of joy in the nearness of God, though sometimes indeed His absence is the occasion of mourning.

This is a different type of experience from either theoretical or moral experience: since the time of Schleiermacher it has been distinguished as religious experience, and its great theological importance has been recognized. Schleiermacher was the first to attempt to define its essence, and his work is still the basis of all later thought on the subject. His own position is not quite uniform: he varied his mode of statement in his later years from that of which he made use in his youth. But in spite of all variety of expression, there is a steady tendency in his thought; and we can see clearly at what all his different efforts aimed.

In the first place, Schleiermacher's intention was epistemological rather than psychological. He did not want simply to describe the way religion works in the human mind, but rather to show how through religion we apprehend God. It is most important that for Schleiermacher the existence of God was metaphysically assured. He held to the essence of the ontological argument, very much as it was developed in the last lecture. Indeed the mode of statement there owed a good deal to the study of Schleiermacher's principal philosophical works, the *Dialectic*<sup>1</sup> and the *Outline of a System of Ethics*.<sup>2</sup> Schleiermacher's philosophy was based throughout on a positive construction of Kantianism, in which the theoretical and the ethical *Critiques* were unified in one metaphysical system, the principle of unification being God.

Religion meant for Schleiermacher an immediate appre-

<sup>1</sup> *Dialektik*, 1839.

<sup>2</sup> *Entwurf eines Systems der Sittenlehre*, 1835.

hension of God, and his problem was to explain the nature of this apprehension. In the first form of his youthful masterpiece, the *Speeches on Religion*, he spoke of an intuition and feeling of the Whole: in *The Christian Faith*, the great work of his maturity, he spoke of a feeling of absolute dependence, which was the same thing as the consciousness of God. Schleiermacher abandoned the term intuition to avoid a confusion with the very different idea of an intellectual intuition characteristic of Schelling, who included under it the apprehension of his complete metaphysical system. But Schleiermacher never abandoned that objectivity of God which his original use of the word intuition was meant to suggest. In further defining the feeling of the Whole as a feeling of absolute dependence, he intended to express the kind of feeling which is religious; but the objectivity of God is firmly included, since a feeling of dependence implies that on which we depend. Altogether, Schleiermacher was attempting to answer the question, how do we apprehend Absolute Reality in religion? and it would not be wrong to sum up his total idea as an intuitive apprehension of the Divine presence actuated by a feeling of complete dependence. What is meant is not very far from what we ordinarily describe as trust.

The later discussion of religion in the nineteenth century moved along psychological lines, and was chiefly concerned with a fuller exploration of the actual working of religion in the soul. A good deal of it is quite beside the mark for our purposes. For example, the connexion

of strong religious feeling with adolescence was emphasized; but we are not concerned now with the occasion of religious feeling but with its nature. It is certainly not the same thing as sex-feeling, however the two may be connected psychologically.

A more important development of the psychology of religion was that which emphasized the subjective aim of religion as salvation or deliverance. It was pointed out that religion appears to be concerned invariably with the attaining of some good which man cannot procure of himself, and for which he seeks the help of God. This was a valuable and true thought. It was recognized in the last lecture that God's power over nature is enlisted to secure human happiness, although certainly upon moral conditions. But as religion first manifests itself in history, those moral conditions hardly come into view; and we find men seeking Divine help for any and every object of desire beyond their own power of attainment.

A right and a wrong conclusion can be drawn from these indubitable facts. On the one hand, religion has been interpreted psychologically as a mere projection of human wishes into the blue. The gods, said Feuerbach, are *Wunschwesen*: the only God is the God Wish. That is the wrong conclusion. On the other hand, it has been perceived that the important fact that religion tends to develop at first apart from ethics, implies a distinction between imperfect and perfect religion. Unethical religion is imperfect: perfect religion is ethical. That is the right conclusion.

It is the metaphysic developed in the last lecture that enables us to make these discriminations. The metaphysic justifies religious experience against psychological misinterpretation. It exhibits a rational basis for religion as the result of an argument. It binds religion up with scientific theory and ethical practice, the firmest things in our experience which we know of outside of it. Indeed, if these are the pillars of our Universe, it shows us God as their support. Religion is no projection into the inane: it takes hold of the Foundation of the Universe, which is God. Our wishes may be realized or unrealized in the changes of time, but God abides. As the Psalmist says, speaking in His name:

The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved:  
I bear up the pillars of it.

The preceding argument holds against the psychological misconstruction of religious experience; but it does not justify all religion. Only an ethical religion is capable of metaphysical justification. The ontological argument does not cover all the forms in which religion has manifested itself, but only that in which it is completely unified with ethics. That means that the true metaphysic of religion is a metaphysic of Christianity. In Christianity religion and ethics are united in the apprehension of God as Love. Love is the highest ethical ideal for humanity, and Love is the nature of God himself. Christianity is the religion in which we are enabled by the Divine Love to imitate the Divine Love. We can do so, not just as Kant

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The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved:  
I bear up the pillars of it.

The preceding argument holds against the psychological misconstruction of religious experience; but it does not justify all religion. Only an ethical religion is capable of metaphysical justification. The ontological argument does not cover all the forms in which religion has manifested itself, but only that in which it is completely unified with ethics. That means that the true metaphysic of religion is a metaphysic of Christianity. In Christianity religion and ethics are united in the apprehension of God as Love. Love is the highest ethical ideal for humanity, and Love is the nature of God himself. Christianity is the religion in which we are enabled by the Divine Love to imitate the Divine Love. We can do so, not just as Kant

thought, because our wills are free, but because the Divine Love moves the free will to reciprocal action.

We call by the name of Revelation the long process by which the religious apprehension of God becomes a real insight into His nature and character. It is on the one hand a self-disclosure of God to the human spirit. 'God can only be known by Divine revelation,' says Brunner quite rightly, in words quoted in a previous lecture. He goes on: 'That is not a specifically Christian principle: on the contrary it is the common principle of all religion, indeed also of all religious philosophy.' Nothing could be more correct. But, on the other hand, the process of revelation is by the increase of insight into the nature and character of God. That is what C. H. Weisse meant when he said that Christianity was not so much *offenbarte Religion* as *offenbare Religion*: that is, not so much religion communicated by God as religion made manifest in its true nature. Does not the New Testament speak of the gospel as an open secret? It is not some mysterious unintelligible communication of a Divine decree, but a bringing of the truth to light.

There is no place where it is more necessary to avoid contamination from the notion of the sheer supernatural than in the doctrine of revelation. No half measures are here sufficient. The necessity of thoroughness can be well illustrated from the debate between the two greatest medieval theologians. St. Thomas Aquinas had a feeling of the danger of making Christianity something altogether unintelligible. Although he held that revelation



principally consisted in the purely supernatural communication to the intellect of truths altogether beyond reason, he still maintained that there could be a science founded on the articles of faith. He said that the first principles of Christianity might be regarded as propositions excerpted from the science of the blessed and transferred to the human intellect, as mathematical conclusions can be conveyed to a person who does not understand mathematics. In this way theology was a science, partly that of the blessed and partly our own.

Such a shift was insufficient to secure the scientific character of Christian theology, when it had once been founded on the pure supernatural. Duns Scotus rightly objected to this casuistry of Thomas, arguing that however evident the articles of faith might be to the blessed, they were on his own showing completely inevident to us; and no science can be built on inevident first principles. Christian theology was therefore in no sense a science: first principles and all the conclusions from them were all based on sheer supernatural revelation. The result of the important debate was to show that a far more drastic handling of the situation was necessary, if the intelligibility of Christianity was to be in any way maintained. Unless we are willing to accept the Scotist doctrine of the pure unintelligibility of Christianity, we must break altogether with the notion of revelation as purely supernatural. Against that conception of revelation we must set that of an intuition of God as Love, an insight into His character as the highest ethical ideal, and a feeling

of complete dependence upon Him for the realization not only of the ethical ideal, but also of all accompanying blessings that our composite nature requires.

Such an insight, fraught as it is with feeling, is nothing less than trust. It is no merely intellectual understanding of the definition of God, even as the Absolute Will of Love. It is one thing to say that Love is a true concern for our moral well-being and happiness. It is another to experience the power of the Divine Love to lift us to moral well-being and happiness. 'I had rather feel compunction, than understand the definition thereof,' says St. Thomas à Kempis; and the deep and penetrating saying goes to the very heart of the difference between all abstract reasoning and vital experience. The reasoning is valuable to show that our experience is not mistaken, that it is neither a hallucination, which seems to perceive what is not really there, nor yet a delusion, which in perceiving what really is there misconstrues it out of all knowledge. The metaphysical arguments of the last chapter avail to show that the revelation which affords us an insight into the Divine nature is a true disclosure of a God who is, and is a disclosure of Him as He is. But what the revelation brings, beyond the power of all argument to effect, is the quickening in us of faith, hope, and love; faith as trust in God, hope as the expectation of final beatitude, and love as at once a response to the Divine goodness and a concern for both the moral well-being and the happiness of our fellow-men.

This twofold meaning of the word love requires some

elucidation. Love in God is one and single, but in us who are moved by the Divine love, it is double. It is at once love to God and love to man. The difference between these two aspects of love in us, and their necessary union, needs to be dwelt upon.

In the first place, it is clear that love to God and love to man are different. God is above us and men are on the same level with us. Love inevitably alters its character in the so different situations. So much is this the case that we find Nygren in his recent book, *Agape and Eros*, declaring that our love to God is not properly love at all, but is simply obedience; while our love to men is just the continuation in us of that Divine and original love, which moves spontaneously from God towards us and other men. As we yield ourselves to God in obedience, so do we become the channels of His love to our fellow-men.

It is not to be disputed that there is a great difference between God's love to men and our love to God, or that again our love to men, so far as it is inspired by love to God, more resembles God's love to us than ours to Him, and may quite properly be regarded as a continuation of the Divine love in and through us. But to identify our love to God with obedience is not satisfactory, unless indeed it is understood that the obedience spoken of is a loving obedience, in which case our thought is simply moving in a circle. There is the obedience of the slave and there is the obedience of the child: it is the latter obedience which we owe to God, and which the revela-

tion of His love to us inspires. Our love to God is of the nature of thanks for His goodness. To go back again to the fundamental words of St. Augustine, quoted at the beginning of these lectures: 'If it was difficult for us to love God, at least it ought not to be difficult for us to love Him in return.'

But the question still remains: Does such gratitude to God for His benefits come under our previous definition of love as a concern for the moral well-being and happiness of those whom we love? In what sense can we be said to have a concern for the moral well-being and happiness of God? Does that in any way depend on us? Does God *need* our love? A modern poet has not scrupled to represent Him as saying:

I miss my little human praise.

But an older poet had written:

God doth not need  
Either man's work, or His own gifts.

Which opinion is right? Milton is nearer the truth than Browning. Even if any one should fail to give God His due, he cannot cause Him to experience need, or suffer in any way whatever. The Divine life does not know the changes of feeling which belong to time, where one state succeeds another, and joy can alternate with sorrow. God's life is not successive: He lives eternally in the unchanging joy of His assured and certain purpose of love, which must prevail, even though it may have to wait what seems to us an endless time for its accomplishment.

Accordingly, our argument appears to have reached an impasse. In view of what has just been said, is it not absurd and indeed almost irreverent to speak of our having a concern for the moral well-being and happiness of God? Our definition of love, the very foundation principle of our whole doctrine, seems altogether to break down in the special case of man's love for God. We may meet the difficulty by saying that we love God, just as we desire Him to be God; or as we give Him the glory and spontaneously obey the commandment, 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me.' This desire that Divine Love should fill the throne of the Universe, as in fact it does, is the hallowing of God's name, and is the same thing as loving God with the whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. The expression of this desire that God should be God, is the adoration of Him as Love regnant in the Universe: we praise God, not because He needs our praise, but because it is the natural outflow of our love for Him.

But even in adding adoration to gratitude, we are still not at an end in exploring the nature of man's love to God. When we love another man, our concern for his moral well-being and happiness runs out into a sharing of his concerns, so far as they are morally good. Love for God, whose concern for mankind is supremely good, moves us to a concern like His own for the moral well-being and happiness of all men. To the desire for the hallowing of God's name succeeds the desire for the advancement of His Kingdom. Thus it is that our love for God becomes the motive power of a love in us for others, which

resembles His love for them. The continuation of the Divine Love through us is no simple transit through us as a channel: it works psychologically at the level of clear insight and profound feeling.

We all know how this connexion between the love of God to us, our love to God, and finally our love to our fellows, pervades the New Testament, coming to expression now on this side and now on that. Christianity lives at the level of that true insight into the Divine Love, which provokes an answering love to God, and works out in a love to men after the Divine pattern.

This connexion between our love for God and our love for other men appears in the words of Jesus, when He says that the first commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; while the second is, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. In St. Paul's epistles this direct connexion is not so much in evidence; but it is noteworthy that there are two places above all where the Apostle rises to the height of lyrical passion: the one is the sublime hymn to the Divine Love at the end of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; and the other is the equally glorious ode on the love of others in the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

But it is in the First Epistle of St. John that the close connexion between the different forms of love, Divine and human, is so especially emphasized.

'Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God. . . .

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. . . . If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us. . . . We love, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.<sup>1</sup>

This then is the Christian insight into the love of God, calling out responsive love to God, and energizing in the love of men. It has been remarked already that the New Testament is full of it, here more, there less, but still pervading the whole. The Christian Church also is full of it, in all its branches and in spite of all its conflicting theologies, often based upon principles that even contradict it.

The question we have now to answer is, How came this insight into the world? How does it still continue in it as a mighty and constraining power over the minds, hearts, and consciences of men, leading them to love God and love their fellows also? There can be but one answer to the question. It can be given in the two words, 'Through Christ'; but these two words inspire the preaching of the whole Christian Gospel.

God is love, I know, I feel;

cries the ecstatic Charles Wesley; we have to consider how the revelation of God through Jesus Christ creates this insight. In a word, it does it by putting us at a point

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iv. 7 ff.

where we can have this insight for ourselves. Jesus Himself, depending upon the Divine Love and giving Himself up to it in free and loving obedience, has so manifested the same love to men in His life that it is brought near to every one to whom the gospel-story comes. There is moral power in the story of Jesus: it is the story of a love to man which is nothing other than the love of God, operative through the love of Jesus for God. The religious dependence of Jesus upon the Father involves the moral unity of Jesus with the Father; so that faith in Jesus is faith in God, and love to Jesus is love for God.

If this sounds theological and abstract, let it be remembered that there is the gospel narrative with all its infinite wealth of suggestion to give life to the theology. The revelation is not in ideas, not even in words or in deeds, except so far as these are the expression of a personality. The personality of Jesus is the true revelation of God. That we may know what the love of God is, it has been translated for us into a human life; and that life of Jesus in the world is the power that enables us to see God and feel God. Let me give the whole verse from Charles Wesley's hymn, of which I have just now quoted a line:

There for me the Saviour stands,  
Shows His wounds and spreads His hands:  
God is love, I know, I feel;  
Jesus weeps, and loves me still.

'God is love, I know, I feel.' How do I know and feel the love of God? It is through the Person and the love of Jesus.



Bushnell puts the point in an original way, when he says that before the advent of Jesus into the world, God had a kind of power over men which may be called 'attribute power'. He observes:

'As being infinite and absolute, we ascribe to Him certain attributes, or perfections. Still, as God is infinite, the perfections are distant. We hardly dare think them, if we could, into our finite moulds. . . . His great attributes become dry words; a kind of milky-way over our heads, vast enough in the matter of extension, but evanescently dim to our feeling.'

'This result had been mitigated, somewhat, by His works and word and Providence, before the coming of Christ. But the tendency still was to carry back all the more genial impressions thus unfolded, and merge them in the attribute power, by which, as an unseen, infinite Being, we had contrived to think and measure His character.'

On the other hand the life of Jesus was a new Divine movement upon the world of an altogether different order. Bushnell says:

'The undertaking is to obtain, through Him, and the facts and processes of His life, a new kind of power; viz., moral power; the same that is obtained by human conduct under human methods. It will be Divine power still, only it will not be attribute power. . . . This new power is to be the power cumulative, gained by Him among men, as truly as they gain it with each other. Only, it will turn out, in the end, to be the grandest, closest to feeling, most impressive, most soul-renovating, and spiritually sublime power that was ever obtained in this or any other world.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bushnell, *The Vicarious Sacrifice*, 1866, pp. 141-3.

That is what Bushnell says; before I have finished with quotation, I will make two extracts from an author of a very different school, which will help us to carry the great theme of Revelation through Christ still farther. The first extract emphasizes again the contrast between the Abstract and the Concrete. Baron von Hügel writes:

'More and more we seem to see that mere Reasoning, Logic, Abstraction—all that appears as the necessary instrument and expression of the Universal and the Abiding—does not move or win the will, either in ourselves or others; and that what does thus move and win it, is Instinct, Intuition, Feeling, the Concrete and Contingent, all that seems to be of its nature individual and evanescent.'<sup>1</sup>

This first quotation from von Hügel states the problem, as we may say, which God had to solve through the Incarnation. It was to give to the Individual and the Contingent the weight and value of the Universal and the Abiding, and to give to the Universal and the Abiding the power of the Individual and the Contingent over the human spirit. It is the triumphant solution of this problem in the Person of Jesus, that constitutes the originality and special genius of Christianity. It is small wonder that St. John of Damascus called the Incarnation the newest of all that is new, in fact the only new thing under the sun; so uniquely does the figure of Jesus stand out upon the page of history.

That brings me to my second quotation from von

<sup>1</sup> *The Mystical Element of Religion*, 1909, vol. i, p. 3.

Hügel, which is one of the noblest passages in modern religious literature:

‘A Person came, and lived and loved, and did and taught, and died and rose again, and lives on by His Spirit for ever within us and amongst us, so unspeakably rich and yet so simple, so sublime and yet so homely, so divinely above us precisely in being so divinely near, . . . that His character and teaching require, for an ever fuller yet never complete understanding, the varying study, and different experiments and applications, embodiments and unrollings of all the races and civilizations, of all the individual and corporate, the simultaneous and successive experiences of the human race to the end of time.’<sup>1</sup>

I quote this great passage not only for its intrinsic beauty, or even for the way in which it suggests to us that the Divine Revelation in Christ, however completely concentrated it may be in the one Person of Jesus, nevertheless opens out into a development of life and experience, individual and social, which is the manifestation of the Kingdom of God in this world. Beyond all this, the passage raises the radical question whether our previous understanding of the revelation of God in Christ is adequate to the facts of history and the experience of the Church.

Is it sufficient to speak of the power of the Gospel as moral power, however sublime? Is it not supernatural power? Was not the power of Jesus when on earth supernatural power? Did He not work miracles? Did He not rise again from the dead? These things are in the very oldest tradition that we possess of Him. What is the place

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

of the miracles and of the resurrection in our modern Gospel? Again, was not the Spirit given to the Church at Pentecost, and is not the Spirit the supernatural power of God accompanying the Gospel and making it effective?

Here are many questions, but in the end they all go back into one root. It is the question of the true supernatural in Christianity. Is it the sheer supernatural or the ethical supernatural? Is it the awesome holy or the ethical holy? We say, in reply, that God's transcendence is never to be separated from its ethical quality. It may be power, but it is power ethically controlled for ethical ends. This means that God deals differently with persons and things; that, while things are subject to His simple power, in dealing with men He always respects the moral personality.

Schweitzer and his followers were right in saying that the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus was not solely internal in the heart, but implied the transformation of nature by the power of God. They were also right in asserting that the eschatological expectation is a necessary part of the gospel of Jesus: eschatology is not just a peculiarity of the first Christian century, but is involved in the nature of ethical theism, as has been shown already. All that is to be regarded as local colouring in the eschatology of Jesus is the foreshortened perspective, and the particular figures used to express what from its nature is inexpressible:

Things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,  
Neither have entered into the heart of man,  
Whatsoever things God hath prepared for them that love Him.

But this perfectly right emphasis on the eschatological character of the Christian Gospel must never be pushed so far as to separate the Kingdom of God from its ethical conditions; as though ethics belonged only to time and not to eternity; as though the Kingdom were 'beyond good and evil', and love did not abide. Even in eternity the relation of God to moral beings must be moral, and there can be no chance of happiness without a right moral relation to God. The doctrine of an interim ethic is dangerously misleading. In spite of all differences, the ethics of time and eternity are one in principle.

Let us apply this general doctrine of the supernatural to the particular points already raised. The miracles and the resurrection have to be considered from a double point of view, that of the general theological position that has been taken up, and that of the historical evidence.

As regards the general theological point of view, the New Testament represents the miracles as anticipations of the final Kingdom of God. According to the Synoptic tradition Jesus saw the presence of the Kingdom already in His preaching of the Gospel, in His miracles, and in the gathering of the disciples round Himself. It is important that the miracles are actuated by a moral purpose; they are never mere supernatural prodigies. Jesus steadily refused a sign of this kind. The whole account of the Temptation in fact exhibits its essence as a solicitation to use supernatural power for non-moral purposes.

As to the historical evidence, a miraculous element appears to be a firm point in the gospel story. It is true

that miracles were commonly expected of the numerous seers and mages of the time. But the abstention from all selfish use of miraculous power which is recorded of Jesus corresponds with His character as we otherwise know it. It has been said that He would be more truly human, if we were to refrain from attributing to Him any miraculous power; but this objection seems to be met sufficiently by the observation that His own personal experience of God was conducted altogether apart from the sphere of the miracles. For us at the present time, who do not see the miracles, their appeal is submerged in that of His moral power. The way we can best use them is not unlike that in which they are used in the Fourth Gospel: that is, we may utilize them to illustrate one or other aspect of the moral power of Jesus.

The Resurrection is not to be classed with the miracles in general: it has been a special article of the Christian faith since the beginning of the Church. It is represented under different theological aspects. The older view generally is that it is God who raises Christ from the dead—St. Paul adds that it was as a reward for His obedience; but according to the Fourth Gospel, it is Christ who raises Himself. We may combine the two points of view by saying that Jesus rose from the dead in dependence on the power of God.

The immortality of man in general has been regarded as an inference from the principle of the Divine Love. God's inviolable purpose is, as Anselm says, to bring men to eternal beatitude. It has been pointed out that a

transformation of nature is implied. But the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as an article of Christian faith, means more than this general belief in immortality. It signifies the manifestation of His immortality in the present world. The precise nature of the manifestation the varying stories do not allow us now to discern. But the recovery of faith by the disciples after the seemingly overwhelming disaster of the crucifixion requires a sufficient explanation: the Resurrection appearances provide it.

That is what is to be said as to the historical evidence for the Resurrection: the theological aspect of it requires further elucidation. The reason why there should be a special manifestation of Jesus Christ alive from the dead arises from His unique position as the Revealer of the Love of God. Jesus had shown all that Divine Love could be or do in word, in work, in patience, in suffering, and even in death. He showed His love for His stricken disciples in a final way by turning their sorrow into joy and revealing Himself as victorious over death. The Resurrection is properly a manifestation of the Divine Love. It corresponds to the Johannine Evangel, 'I will not leave you comfortless: I come unto you.' The Resurrection is not a sheer display of power, but has an ethical value.

The author of the Fourth Gospel, writing at a time when the Resurrection appearances had ceased, identified the presence of the Living Christ in the Church with that of the Spirit. St. Paul had already made the same identification. There is no Christian doctrine that requires

more care than that of the Spirit. Here it is all important that we should see things in the right perspective from the standpoint of the revelation of God's love in Jesus.

On account of its Old Testament origins, the conception of the Spirit, even in Christian theology, is too easily identified with the notion of mere supernatural power. The Spirit in the primitive Old Testament conception is the power of God that falls upon a man, takes hold of him, uses him as an instrument: we must retain from the Old Testament the notion of power, but we must remember that in Christian theology the Divine power in its relation to the human spirit must be conceived as that of love. That is the meaning of St. Paul's battle with the Corinthian Church over the gift of tongues.

The Spirit of God must be understood, not as sheer supernatural and inexplicable power, but as God's personal love felt in the heart. As we know this personal love through Christ, the criterion whether the power of religious conviction and faith in any man is due to the Spirit of God is that it should manifest itself in a love for God and men after the pattern of Jesus. The Spirit and the Gospel-story are the conjoint means of the continued presence of Jesus Christ in the Church. The Spirit is the power of the Love of God which accompanies the Gospel and reaches us through it.

Those who are actuated by the Revelation of God in Christ constitute the Christian Church, in so far as they are united for the common worship of God on the basis of this revelation. The Church is rightly described as the



sphere of the Divine grace, which is the special name for the Divine Love in its relation to human nature, as it transforms our humanity by its power into its own character. The grace of God overcomes the natural fears, doubts, and weaknesses of the finite spirit, and above all the tendency to selfishness which follows upon finitude. Yet in so doing it acts through the conscience and the reason, not by violence. That is a great word of St. Thomas Aquinas: *gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*. But, if we carry it out, it will lead to a considerable modification of his own doctrine of grace. The medieval doctrine of grace as a habit of love supernaturally infused through the sacrament has been criticized already as making havoc of the moral personality. But the matter is of such importance that it is desirable to go farther into it; and there can be no better way of doing this than by a review of the doctrine of St. Thomas. So much of it is so absolutely right, that it is urgently necessary to see where the deviation takes place.

St. Thomas distinguishes three meanings of the word grace. It signifies (1) God's love, according to which He holds any one in favour (*gratum*); (2) any gift of His grace; (3) the thanks, which we return to Him, saying grace.<sup>1</sup>

The second of these meanings, grace as a gift is further defined to mean both a particular motion in the soul and a habit by which man tends to the supernatural eternal good. In this latter sense it is a quality in the soul.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Summa Theologica*, II. I, qu. 110, art. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 2.

Now there is no doubt that this analysis closely corresponds to the New Testament use of the term, as a reference to Grimm-Thayer's Lexicon will show. But the fault is that the New Testament phraseology is not consistently interpreted throughout from the basis of the revelation of God in Christ. The first and third meanings of the word stand immediately on that basis. There is the love of God which is the principle of the transformation of human nature; and there is the gratitude or responsive love that it evokes, which is the way of the transformation. With the second meaning the case is different. To speak of grace as a gift is simply to use a figure to indicate that the whole process begins with God. We must distinguish between gifts and graces, when each word is taken strictly. Gifts are properly natural endowments; graces are developed out of these gifts by the Divine grace acting upon the moral personality, and provoking in it the responsive love that utilizes natural gifts for God's service. Love cannot be infused into the heart in any literal sense: when St. Paul uses a similar phrase in Romans v. 5, we have to look at the whole meaning, not at the particular words.

The Church is therefore the sphere of grace, so far as it is the sphere of the Gospel, which tells of the love of God in Christ. Our worship of God is one form of the thanks that we return to Him for His great love: the other is the love to men to which His grace moves us. These constitute the spiritual sacrifice which we offer to God, which is always one of thanksgiving.

Since the Reformation, Protestantism has reckoned the word and the sacraments as the means of grace. The position is sound, provided that we interpret both word and sacraments from the standpoint of the Revelation of God's love.

We shall no longer say with the old Protestant theologians that the 'word' includes law and gospel, as though these were two different things. The word which the Church preaches is the gospel of God's love. That love of God is at once the standard of moral action and the grace that enables us to act rightly. We love because He first loved us.

As to the sacraments, more will be said on them in the next lecture; but speaking now of the sacraments *in genere*, I am compelled to observe that the Protestant churches have never been too clear about their meaning, and have found it very difficult often to get rid of sheer supernaturalism.

Naturam expellas furcâ, tamen usque recurret.

Heitmüller has pointed out most admirably how it is the indefinite suggestiveness of rites that gives them so much power over men's spirits. He says:

'Precisely what is attractive and characteristic in such acts and processes is that they awaken manifold sensations and moods in those who solemnize them, and that they admit of manifold interpretations, which need not always thoroughly agree with one another. The rites remain, the views as to their significance change.'

This is very true: it has too often meant that through this

manifoldness of significance, the sacraments have afforded an opportunity for the harbouring within Protestantism, or the return into it, of many doctrinal ideas contrary to its essential nature. One of the greatest dangers that besets modern Protestantism is an infection with pre-Reformation doctrine through the insufficiently reflective imitation of pre-Reformation practices in ritual. Accepted to enhance devotion, they presently trail after them a whole crowd of un-evangelical ideas. The best observance of the sacraments for Protestants is the simplest.

There is only one conception of the sacraments which is really consistent with the true meaning of the Divine grace. If the grace of God means His free favour, His love moving towards men to bring them into fellowship with Himself; if the Gospel means the proclamation of this favour; then the one way of interpreting the sacraments consistently with these things, is to be found in the words of Calvin, when he says that the sacraments present the Gospel in a picture. While the word preached moves us through the sense of hearing, the sacraments move us also through the other senses. If we try to make more of the sacraments than of the Gospel, let us beware lest we altogether destroy their value for Christians.

## LECTURE VII

### THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS

THE last lecture concerned itself with the revelation of God in Christ as the actual means of the realization of the Kingdom of God among men. God's love revealed through Christ is the grace that transforms human nature into its own likeness: it energizes in and through the Church.

But the picture was of the ideal, not of the real. A shadow falls across it; and a voice says to us: 'Nondum considerasti, quanti ponderis sit peccatum.' We have to remember how

disproportioned sin  
Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din  
Broke the fair music that all creatures made  
To their great Lord; whose love their motion swayed.

It is the fact of sin that turns the doctrine of the Revelation of God's love through Christ into a doctrine of Atonement, and that changes the doctrine of the Church from one of a fellowship of saints into one of a fellowship of pardoned sinners called to be saints.

In weighing the gravity of sin, as Anselm bids us do, we must weigh it in a true balance. Nothing is gained by bringing in considerations which are either doubtful or irrelevant.

Another way of saying the same thing is to observe that in estimating sin, just as in estimating righteousness, we

must preserve the central standpoint already gained, from which alone everything can be seen in its true proportion. That standpoint is concisely defined by saying that the essence of Christianity is the revelation of the love of God through Christ to the moral personality. God's righteousness is His love considered as a law of conduct, the standard to which the subjects of His Kingdom should conform. But that is only one aspect of the Divine Love: the same love under another aspect is grace, love energizing to draw others under its power and transform them into its own image. Such is the nature of love: love kindles love.

What then is sin? It is the rejection of the Divine Love, alike as a standard of conduct and in its transforming power. There is no need to aggravate the weight of sin by bringing in any other extraneous considerations. Sin is only truly measured by the love which it rejects and refuses. It is failure to trust and obey God. It destroys the fellowship of man with God; and, inasmuch as the principle of love is the bond of union among men under the Divine Sovereignty, it destroys the fellowship of men with one another. It may, perhaps, be objected that what Seeley called 'the enthusiasm of humanity' can subsist without belief in God. Russian Communism has undertaken to preserve the brotherhood of man on an atheistic basis; but it does it by sacrificing the moral individual to the state. It would appear that it is only the value of the individual to God that can finally guarantee his worth even to his fellows.

The reason is now evident why it was necessary before speaking of sin to study the revelation of God through Christ. In order properly to know what sin is, we must first know what the love of God is. There are all sorts of measures of wrongdoing lower than that of the Divine Love revealed in Christ; but these have only a partial validity. God has been at work in all the long history of humanity, revealing Himself by divers portions and in divers manners. There is a partial revelation of His righteousness in the various ethical customs and standards of mankind, whether sacred or secular. The general principle at work here is that the degree of sin varies with the degree of moral insight. Christianity is not immediately concerned with all the steps and stages of the evolution of religion and morals, or with the different degrees of offence which correspond to them. All we have to say is that so far as man knows and rejects the love of God, so far he is sinful. So far as the Divine Love is only imperfectly realized through the veil of non-Christian religions and civilizations, so far sin is diminished in the offender. As Christians, we have to place ourselves at the standpoint of the perfect revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and estimate sin in the full light of God's love. The Christian Church calls men to repentance, just in that it preaches the Reign of the Divine Love. Jesus Himself led the way, showing God's love in His own Person: the Church follows Him, still pointing to the same revelation, and saying, Behold the man: behold what love!

Sin as the rejection of the Divine Love is always a

personal matter; although it is only too true that the sin of one man provokes that of others, both by way of example and reaction. There is a kingdom of sin which opposes itself to the Kingdom of God. But the social aspect of sin must never be allowed to obscure its personal character. Whatever temptation to sin may come from without, a man's sin consists in his own wrong acts and the habits engendered by them. As it is said in the Apocalypse of Baruch, 'Each one of us has been the Adam of his own soul.' St. Paul's derivation of sin from Adam, and his location of it in the flesh, cannot be pressed farther in systematic theology than to mean that we all enter into a world already sinful, and that it is the general experience of mankind that our powerful natural instincts are too much for reason to master, as long as it is unaided by the revelation of the Divine love in Christ.

The weight of sin is rightly spoken of as its guilt. The special implication of this word is that of the personal responsibility of the sinner for his sin. *Mea, mea culpa*, is the language of guilt. There can be no guilt where there is no responsibility; and the measure of responsibility is the measure of moral insight. We are guilty in our own judgement and in the judgement of God, so far as we have sinned deliberately against light.

There is great confusion about the nature of guilt. Too often it has been interpreted from the standpoint of stages of religious and moral development below that of the Christian religion. Ethnic religion interprets guilt through the Divine displeasure directed against the sinner, which



is conceived as an almost self-acting curse, bringing all manner of evil upon the offender. Legal religion works with the analogy of the justice of the state, where guilt, once proved, is marked by stated and ordered punishment according to the measure of the offence.

Such ideas of guilt as subjection to a curse or as obligation to punishment are often praised as objective; whereas in reality the objectivity which they define has nothing to do with guilt at all, but only with its expected consequences according to a certain view of the Divine working. Guilt in itself has nothing to do with consequences: it is the measure of the wrong itself as judged by the appropriate standard, whatever that may be. In Christian theology guilt is not measured, as it is in ethnic religion, by some unintelligible taboo which has been broken, or even, as in legalistic religion, by a juridical system which sin flouts and antagonizes. We are guilty before God, as He accounts us rebellious against His love. That and nothing else is the Christian view of guilt.

Accordingly, the removal of guilt, if it be possible, is not the annulment of a self-acting curse; nor is it the remission of punishment duly deserved: it is a change in the judgement of God by which He judges us no longer rebels, but repentantly trustful of His mercy, which is just His love in its special exercise towards those who have sinned. Nothing judges more clearly or consistently than love. It is the same love that judges us guilty sinners, when we rebel against it; and that removes our guilt, when in repentance and trust we return from our rebellion.

The special name of the judgement that annuls the guilt of sin is forgiveness. It is most necessary to be clear what forgiveness means. If it is not the taking-off of a curse or the remission of a penalty, it is certainly no mere inefficacious formula that in no way alters the hard facts of the case. It is a restoration of the sinner to communion with God: it is the breaking down of the barriers between them. When God says that my guilt is forgiven, it *is* forgiven; and I am reinstated in the life of trust and obedience towards Him. God's forgiveness is creative of a new relation between Him and myself.

So far all seems simple. But there are certain difficulties, which have led to more complicated notions concerning forgiveness, including the attempt to interpret it through expiation or satisfaction. Can we really or rightly believe that the Divine forgiveness removes our guilt? If our sin be a crime against other men, are we not still guilty in their sight, even though God may have forgiven us? In any case, are we not guilty in our own eyes? Can anything alter the fact that we have done wrong? Can God's forgiveness itself undo what has been done? It is reflections such as these, that have led to the connexion of the Divine forgiveness with some so-called objective work of Christ in undoing sin or making satisfaction for it.

As to our guilt in the eyes of others, we must distinguish. The Divine forgiveness may leave us still responsible for our crimes in the eyes of the state or of society in general, so that in payment for them certain penalties, legal or social, will be exacted from us. At the moment,

however, we are not concerned with these legal or social consequences of our crime, but only with the problem of our guilt itself. Can our guilt in the eyes of men co-exist with the fact that God has forgiven us?

Still more, even if God forgives us, can we forgive ourselves? The argument in the fifth lecture was that in the present position of philosophy we are led up to belief in God above all through ethics, and that the first principle of ethics is the self-legislation of the reason in accordance with its own insight. We have to judge ourselves by that law which we ourselves acknowledge as right and just: whatever God may do in forgiving us, must we not still hold ourselves guilty as transgressors against the moral law within?

This question takes us to the very centre of Christian theology and ethics. It is soluble only by that moral insight which perceives that love is the highest righteousness. *We cast no slight upon the moral law, when we accept forgiveness at the hands of God. We simply recognize love as the highest moral principle.*

What is the test, by which we judge, whether a rule of conduct is moral or otherwise? Is it not, whether we can invert the rule as between ourselves and others? Forgiveness is justified in this way as a moral principle. We must forgive, as we expect others to forgive us. But what is the other aspect, equally important, of this matter of forgiveness? Is it not that, as we are to forgive others, we ourselves must be ready to accept forgiveness?

It is, therefore, our moral duty to accept the Divine

forgiveness when it is offered, making no question for conscience' sake. To make such question, to say that we cannot forgive ourselves, no matter what God may do, is to show that we have not understood the Christian revelation at all. It is simply unbelieving to be unwilling to accept the Divine forgiveness in its free grace. It is to persist in the sin of doubt to say that we cannot believe in it, unless we are sure that the sins of the past have been expiated, or that satisfaction has been made for them. To do so is to bring down Christianity to the level of ethnic religion or human legal systems.

Forgiveness must be absolute, or it is no real forgiveness. Men sometimes say, 'I will forgive, but I cannot forget'; meaning that, in spite of all the show they make of forgiving, they still retain in their minds a grudge because of past offences. But such an attitude is most unchristian. Are we to attribute it to God? Are we to think of His forgiveness as a hollow thing, that lacks solidity, unless we are sure that expiation or satisfaction stands as its ground?

In reality, an expiation or satisfaction in the strict sense of the words would make forgiveness not only unnecessary but also actually impossible. If a debt is paid, even by another, the same debt cannot be forgiven. Payment and forgiveness are contrary in character: each excludes the other. Forgiveness is in its nature entirely free.

The perfect exposition of sin and forgiveness has been given once for all by our Lord Himself in the parable of the Prodigal Son. Here the nature of sin as distrust of

God and consequent rebellion against Him is clearly shown. The prodigal distrusted the Father's love: he wanted, as we say, to be on his own. The home seemed to him a place of narrow restrictions, and he rebelled against them. Equally clearly is shown the nature and the manner of forgiveness. When the prodigal repents, the father freely forgives him, restores him to the home, to its life, its duties, and its privileges. Forgiveness is the judgement pronounced by the Divine Love, through which God receives the repentant sinner again to communion with Himself.

What, then, are we to say of the consequences of sin? Experience shows that a moral order does in part prevail even now in the universe; and sin undoubtedly does entail most serious consequences upon ourselves and others. The worst consequence of sin is alienation from God. The guilt of sin is the same thing morally regarded, which religiously viewed is alienation from God. It has been explained already how forgiveness is the removal of guilt and alienation in one.

But there are other consequences of sin. Some are physical, as when sin entails disease. Some are social, and some in particular are legal. It is clear that the Divine forgiveness does not remove directly either the physical or the social consequences of our sins. The forgiven man may have still to bear the penalty of his wrong-doing in enfeebled health: if he has committed a crime against society, he will be punished legally: if he has committed some social offence not punishable legally, he may still

have to endure ostracism, or at least loss of status among his fellows. So far as those whom he has offended are Christians, they will forgive, as God forgives: there is no Christian duty enjoined upon us more definitely in the Gospel, or which more obviously and naturally springs out of its central principle of love. It is absurd for us to suppose ourselves forgiven of God, if we ourselves are unforgiving: we show by our unforgiving character that we are still in rebellion against the Divine will, which bids us love God and love our fellows.

But the extension of the Divine forgiveness through the Christian community does not cover all the ground previously mentioned. Various physical and social sufferings entailed by sin remain. What has the Christian Gospel to say as to these?

We must reach our answer through a brief consideration of the problem of evil. Quite apart from sin, evil appears in the world in the sense of the frustration of the instincts and desires of living beings by the order of nature. Injuries from natural causes, such as earthquakes, storms and floods, belong together with disease and death to the physical order of the world in which we live. It is impossible to put all these things down directly as the effect of sin, as a less scientific age found it easy to do. Why there are evils in a world ruled by God, is one of the severest problems theology has to face. To it various answers have been given, especially that evils are inevitably attendant upon finitude, and that they have educational value: 'the burnt child dreads the fire.' Such

answers mitigate the difficulty; and are not to be despised, even if they do not wholly remove it.

Christian theology, from its standpoint of the Divine Love, must, however, repudiate entirely the ethnic idea that suffering is always the consequence of sin. We can utilize here the Johannine narrative of the man blind from his birth. The disciples ask: 'Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus replies: 'Neither did this man sin, nor did his parents; but it was that the works of God might be made manifest in him.'

There is only one attitude towards suffering possible to a Christian, whether he has brought it upon himself by his own sin and folly, or whether it has been caused by others, or by the course of nature. That is to regard it as a Divine discipline. We must bring all suffering whatever under the rule in the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'It is for chastening that ye endure: God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not.' Regarding suffering in this way, we may draw from it profit and blessing, and find the fulfilment of the further words in the same passage: 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that have been exercised thereby.'

It is as a Divine discipline that the forgiven man has to regard the consequences of sin which remain after he is forgiven. It is wrong for him to view them as the penalties of sin, so far as God is concerned. His sin is forgiven: if

its evil consequences remain, they are to be borne in patience and trust. In this way the Christian can bear whatever physical and social consequences remain from his wrong-doing: it may be that in time his new life of obedience to God will react in his favour upon these consequences and result in their mitigation, or even their removal.

From this discussion of the consequences of sin and how the Gospel deals with them, let us go back to the central question of forgiveness itself. We have still to touch the heart of the Atonement: we have to inquire, How is forgiveness through Christ?

It is often supposed, quite wrongly, that to take our views of forgiveness from the parable of the Prodigal Son is to leave no place for Jesus in the Gospel. Both liberal and conservative theologians may be found joining together in this judgement, however different are the inferences they draw from it. The conservatives argue that the parable gives us only a very imperfect idea of the Divine forgiveness, which needs to be supplemented by a doctrine of expiation or satisfaction. The liberals declare in the famous phraseology of Harnack, that Jesus is not in the Gospel, but only the Father.

What are we to say to both sides? Let us go back to the beginning of the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and read the words that introduce the parables of the chapter: 'Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.'



It was the *approachableness* of Jesus that gave force to His spoken words.

No doubt Our Lord spoke the parables in defence of His actions: He said in effect, You object to my seeking the lost, and to my refusing to allow their sin to be a barrier between us: my apology is that, in so doing, I imitate God. But in the end it was the actions of Jesus that explained and justified His words. By His conduct Jesus not only imitated, but also *revealed* the Father: He made believable all the wonderful things which He said about God. Let us recall what has been maintained already about revelation. The trouble is that inadequate ideas of revelation continually invade the doctrine of the Atonement, just as do meagre ideas of forgiveness. The fallacy dies hard, that revelation in Christian theology means no more than an intellectual statement of some spiritual truth, which leaves men's hearts untouched and cold. Nowhere is such an idea of revelation more ruinous than in the doctrine of the Atonement.

The inadequacy of the notion may indeed sometimes be corrected by allowing that Jesus not only taught the truth concerning God, but supported it by His example; though this addition is only made for its virtue to be diminished, as much as possible, by speaking contemptuously of the impotence of mere example. I do not know any phrase used by theologians with more of the *suggestio falsi* than this of 'mere example'. What is implied is that an example is an ideal, which contains in itself no power for its own realization. The example of Christ has been

compared to a marble statue, faultless in its perfection, but cold and dead. Was there ever any analogy more untrue or more misleading? That is not the way in which the principle of example is used in the New Testament. Consider only the living portraiture of the heroes of faith in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with the culminating appeal to the example of Our Lord Himself at the beginning of the twelfth chapter. Example in the New Testament, and especially the example of Christ, is never 'mere example', in the derogatory sense of an example that gives us no help to imitate it. It is an example containing in itself power and life, the principles of its own reproduction.

Therefore, we shall not undervalue example or dismiss it with the minimizing phrase of 'mere example'. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that the introduction of the idea of example to help out the concept of revelation may very easily lead us wrong. The notion of revelation coheres with that of example, not so much when the latter is understood in the sense of the object of our imitation, as when it is taken in the more fundamental meaning of a concrete embodiment of what might otherwise appear only as an abstract principle. When we speak of Jesus in the present connexion as an example of Divine Love, it is not meant that we are to imitate that love, though it is true that it is our duty to do so: what is intended is that in Jesus the Divine Love takes concrete form for us: in a word, becomes incarnate, so as to come near us. The whole truth is not contained even in the phrase, the

approachableness of Jesus, which interprets the impression made by St. Luke's words, 'Then drew near all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him.' We must remember that the first move came from Jesus Himself. The Pharisees saw that very clearly: their accusation of Him, which they thought so damning, was: 'This man *receiveth* sinners and eateth with them.'

When we say that Jesus is an example of the Divine Love, we use an imperfect term to indicate that God's love moves towards us in Him, touches us, and moves us through Him. Those who say that the parable of the Prodigal Son does not contain the whole truth as to the Divine forgiveness, are after all right; though what is omitted from the parable is not expiation or satisfaction, as they think: it is simply that in forgiveness the *initiative* is with God. The parable of the prodigal itself certainly speaks of the approach of God to the sinner: 'While he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.' But that does not take us back to the very first movement on the part of God, nor does the parable tell us of this. Farther back in the parable we read that the prodigal came to himself and said, I will arise and go to my father. He did it of his own motion; though that motion was inspired by a recollection of the father's goodness. But God has not left us simply to remember His great goodness, or to meditate on His mercy. In Jesus His love is *active*, seeking us even to the uttermost, coming where we are, finding us in the far country of estrangement

whither our sins have brought us. We forget sometimes that the parable of the Prodigal Son does not stand alone in the fifteenth chapter of St. Luke. That great parable exhibits one aspect of the Divine forgiveness; but there is another, and that is illuminated in the preceding parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin. Especially is it brought out in the former parable; though to see its full meaning we must take with it the Johannine words: 'The Good Shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep:' 'Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends.' God's reception of the sinner is not the beginning of His ways with the sinner: before that is the seeking for the sinner that has no end, till he be found. It is this search, which God makes through Christ, that is the full meaning of the revelation of God's love in Him. When we speak of revelation in this connexion, it is not of a doctrine that we should think, but of love active, love enduring, suffering, dying. We should think of the Divine initiative in the Cross: that and nothing less is what is meant.

The problem of the Atonement has been stated sometimes in the form, How to make sin forgivable. But this mode of statements is dangerous. It is hard to keep it clear of the idea of an infringed taboo, or a violated law, with expiation or satisfaction as the means of overcoming the infringement. The proper way to state the problem is not to speak impersonally of sin in the abstract, but personally of the sinner in the concrete; and to say that the difficulty is to make the *sinner* forgivable. The great

and tremendous obstacle that has to be overcome in forgiveness is that of making the sinner sincerely willing to accept the forgiveness. The obstacle is the hardness, deceitfulness, and impenitence of the human heart. The problem of the Atonement is just that of bringing the sinner truly to acknowledge and confess his sin, and to turn in trustful obedience to the Father. That is what Christ does, manifesting the love of God in the Cross.

The nearest analogy to Our Lord's work of Atonement that we can find in common experience is that of the doctor or nurse, who goes down to work among a plague-stricken people, until at last the saviour is stricken with the very same pestilence. Christian theology has been guided by a sure instinct in connecting the Atonement with the sufferings, and especially with the death of Jesus. Where it has gone astray has been in thinking that it was the sufferings and the death themselves that saved us; whereas the saving power was in the love that carried Our Lord into them, and bore them. Their value is not purificatory, or expiatory, or satisfactory: it is revelatory. The passion of Christ shows how much He loved us: He loved not only men, but sinners; and the love of the sinful brought suffering in its train.

Jesus in His search for the lost was found where they were. It was not only that He mixed with them, ate with them, lived with them. All this He might have done without spiritual contact. We come near to others in *sympathy*. Jesus understood the temptation of the sinful; He knew their evil case. His heart melted for their aliena-

tion from the Father and from Himself. We get a glimpse into His feeling in the sad words: 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.'

The approach of Jesus to sinners brought upon Him all sorts of sufferings, bodily and spiritual. He met with harsh words, hateful looks, fierce attacks, actuated by malice, treachery, and cruelty. But He went on with His work of love, teaching, warning, pleading, till at last the sinners, whom He came to save by drawing them to the Father, rose up against Him, mocked, scourged, and crucified Him. It was the best proof of love that, when faced with the utmost energy of sinful resistance to the Divine will of love, He did not withdraw or try to escape or deviate by one hair's breadth from His course. He simply persevered in loving men, as God loves them. The cry from the Cross in St. Luke's Gospel shows the spirit in which Jesus died. He prayed for His murderers: 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'

The death of Jesus for love's sake brought to a focus that whole energy of love, which was the principle of His life in the world from start to finish. The way in which His death has become the power of Atonement in the world is *not inexplicable*. There are parallels in the martyrdoms of the saints, which have so greatly contributed to the advance of the Kingdom and the saving of men. We ought not to be afraid of the reproach so often directed against the experiential theory of the Atonement, that it makes of Christ a mere martyr. Again, the word

'mere' is misleading and insulting. What nobler analogy to the work of Christ does history contain than that of the martyr, whether the martyr for religious truth or social betterment? The Fourth Gospel definitely sums up the work of Jesus under this aspect in His reply to Pilate: 'To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.' The sentence receives its full value, when we remember that Jesus was going to His death, and that the Greek for 'witness' and 'martyr' is one and the same word, *μάρτυς*.

The difference between Jesus and others is not that the name of martyr is inadequate to His worth: it is in the principle of life, for which He was a martyr. No other ever lived, like Him, exclusively in the power of the Divine Love. His death possesses its unique power because of the life, whose whole impact upon humanity is gathered up in this final act. Because Jesus lived wholly in love towards sinful men, therefore His death concentrates the Divine Love for sinners in one single burning point. An event in history is fraught with the whole power of eternity. The power of the Cross is the power of the love that died. I do not say that the suffering of Christ is the suffering of God, any more than I say that God died: the suffering and the death belong to the human revelation of the Divine Love, which Jesus came to make. But I do say that the same love, which in Jesus found expression in suffering and death, is the very love of the Father: it is the power of the Divine forgiveness, the grace that saves to the uttermost.

Mention was made earlier in the lecture of the problem of making, not the sin, but the sinner forgivable. It was decided that what was necessary to make the sinner forgivable, was to bring him to accept forgiveness. That does not refer to the false acceptance of forgiveness by the hypocrite, who professes to be forgiven, but lives a life obviously out of communion with God, and is in rebellion against His will. It refers to that real acceptance of forgiveness, which brings a man into fellowship with God, restoring him to his true position of trust and obedience.

The Cross makes the sinner forgivable just because it creates penitence and trust, which are two aspects of one and the same process of the reunion of the sinner with God. Perhaps the most comprehensive summary of the whole purpose and reason of the death of Christ is contained in the simple words of 1 Peter iii. 18: 'Christ also suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.' Has the Cross brought man to God? Experience answers that it has. The power of the Cross, indeed, is moral power. It moves and constrains, but it does not compel. It acts as a moral power should act by promoting insight. Insight into the love of God is very difficult for the sinner. Either he thinks too lightly of it, taking it for granted, and saying 'God will forgive me, it is His business.' Or else he swings off to the other extreme, and disbelieves in the possibility of forgiveness altogether. He says that nothing can alter what has been done: 'All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this



little hand,' cries Lady Macbeth. The heart hardens itself to carelessness, or to despair: what matter which? In either case, it shuts out the love of God. There is a power that again and again has broken down equally the obstacle of indifference and the obstacle of distrust. It is the power of the Cross. It is the energy of the Divine Love that neither makes light of sin nor yet rejects the sinner, but forgives, and restores him to God.

From this point of view we get a new understanding of the Church and the Sacraments, which goes beyond that sketched in the last lecture. The Church is not simply a fellowship of men drawn together by the Divine Love manifested in Jesus, in order that through the common worship of God they may be fitted for His Kingdom. It is still more a company of those who have sinned, and have received forgiveness through the final revelation of God's love on the Cross. In the Church the gospel of the love of God is preached not only as a gospel of the Kingdom, but also as a gospel of the forgiveness of sins. As Luther said, 'The Church is full of the forgiveness of sins'.

It is the gospel of forgiveness which is the special content of the Sacraments: not that the complete gospel of the Kingdom is not preached through them, even to a church of the forgiven. But what is specially and peculiarly proclaimed is the forgiveness of sins, as reconciliation with God.

The gospel is preached prophetically to the child in baptism; so that, as he grows up and is instructed in the

nature of the Divine Kingdom, all his way through the world is overcanopied with the great broad heaven of the forgiveness of sins, to adapt yet another splendid phrase of Luther's. The child brought up in the Church is surrounded on all sides by the Divine Love, of which forgiveness is the supreme expression.

In the Lord's Supper the gospel of forgiveness is preached in a specially poignant way to the mature believer. It is evident that Jesus, on the night in which He was betrayed, intended to present His death to His disciples under the aspect of a sacrifice, establishing a new covenant between God and them. The rite of the Supper had a double symbolism: first, the covenant sacrifice itself was symbolized by the broken bread and the outpoured wine; and then, participation in the covenant was symbolized according to ancient usage by eating and drinking.

The complete discussion of what is meant by the sacrifice of Christ must wait for the next lecture. We may here anticipate so far as to say that, whatever be the significance of sacrifice in history, there is only one dogmatic interpretation of Our Lord's death as a sacrifice, which is coherent with the fundamental understanding of the Cross as a revelation of the Divine Love. We shall say that Christ offered Himself up to God on the Cross to be the means of this revelation. The adequacy of such an idea of sacrifice certainly remains yet to be proved; but accepting it in advance, we can see in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper a representation of Christ's sacrifice, not indeed a representation of it by us to God in any way to pro-

pitiate Him, but a representation of it by God to us as the means of His revelation of Himself. In it Jesus is set forth before us as crucified. It is, as it were, a crucifix with the legend, Behold how He loved. The peculiar virtue of this sacrament is that it gathers us together again and again from all the manifold hopes and duties of the Kingdom, just to the one point where anew we look upon the Cross, and realize afresh God's love commended to us at so great a cost. That the Church is full of the forgiveness of sins is manifest in its every action, in praise, in prayer, and in preaching; but nowhere is it more manifest than in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That was what moved Elizabeth Charles to write:

No Gospel like this feast,  
Spread for Thy Church by Thee;  
Nor Prophet nor Evangelist  
Preach the glad news so free.

In fact, in the Supper it is Jesus Himself, who by His repeated words and acts preaches the gospel of forgiveness, and brings us into communion with God. That is why the sacrament has taken so intense a hold upon the imagination of the Church, and has inspired its deepest devotion.

## LECTURE VIII

### RECONSIDERATION OF THE HISTORIC THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT

THIS course of lectures began with a reference to Dr. Dale and his book on the Atonement. It was said that piety towards the past did not necessarily consist in repeating its theories: it might take the form of pursuing the same inquiry with a similar sincerity and arriving at different conclusions. The central doctrine of the Atonement which was developed in the last lecture was indeed very different from that of Dr. Dale. It was one which he would have disowned, and indeed to refute which his book was mainly written.

Nevertheless, the spirit of our inquiry has so much coincided with that of Dale's work on the Atonement, that I am in the happy position of being able to begin this lecture with some quotations from him. He says:

'The descriptions of the Death of Christ in the New Testament, as a Sacrifice, a Propitiation, a Ransom, are of infinite practical value; but we misapprehend the true principles and methods and aims of theological science, if we make these descriptions the basis of a theory of the Atonement.'<sup>1</sup>

'These illustrations of the nature and effect of the Death of Christ are illustrations, and nothing more. They are analogous to the transcendent fact only at single points. The fact is absolutely unique.'<sup>2</sup>

'To construct a theory we must put these descriptions

<sup>1</sup> Dale, *The Atonement*, 1897, p. 359.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 358.

aside, and consider the Death of Christ in its real relations to God and to man.<sup>1</sup>

That is what Dr. Dale says should be done, and that is what we have been trying to do. The difference from him has been in taking a different centre from which to fix the relations of the death of Christ to God and man. Dr. Dale found his standpoint in the Eternal Law of Righteousness which connects sin and punishment. Reasons have been given for thinking that that is not the true centre from which to work. It had been argued that the highest righteousness is not the justice which punishes, but is the love which forgives. We cannot stand at any conception of God, save the highest. There can be no first principle in theology other than that God is Love.

Let us see what justice can be done from this point of view to those other great theories of the Atonement which have tried to work from other standpoints. The Anselmic method which we have been following requires that we should reinterpret these theories, where it is possible; and only repudiate them where they are absolutely incapable of reinterpretation.

Three types of theory, other than the experiential doctrine which has been adopted, have been described, subjected to criticism, and finally rejected as lacking in substance. They are the Greek or Patristic theory of recapitulation, or alternatively of ransom; the Latin theory of satisfaction and merit; and the theory of arbitrary sovereignty, which after emerging in both the

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

Greek and the Latin fathers, finds its sharpest expression in the later medieval scholasticism. I will first dispose of the theory of arbitrary sovereignty, and then consider the two other theories of the Atonement in their historical order.

There is no possibility of reinterpreting the doctrine which explains the death of Christ by the arbitrary sovereignty of God. Our aim throughout has been to find a reasoned theory of the Atonement; and recourse to the principle of sovereignty means that no reason can be found or given. The doctrine of arbitrary sovereignty amounts to the repudiation of Reason: conversely, the acceptance of any reasoned theory of the Atonement involves the rejection of the doctrine of arbitrary sovereignty. Nevertheless, this bizarre doctrine, which makes the Atonement simply a Divine caprice, is after all a distortion of an important truth. That truth is that the Divine Love is free and spontaneous, even though God cannot act otherwise than in love. In the Absolute which is Love, necessity and freedom are one; just as love in God is at once ethical demand and the power to realize it. God is the point where apparent opposites meet; and that is just what makes the doctrine of God so difficult. But this difficulty must not lead us to upset the true balance of the doctrine by a distorted emphasis on one of the opposites only, which is what the doctrine of arbitrary sovereignty does, when it turns away from the principle of rational necessity. It is when, guided by Christ, we come to know that God is love, that we stand at the point where

distortion ceases, and all things appear in their true proportions.

What is to be said of the Greek or Patristic theory of the Atonement? How far can it be reinterpreted? It has found a warm advocate recently in Aulén, who regards it as having advantages over both the Latin theory and the experiential theory. But I do not think that his advocacy will stand examination: most of it hardly amounts to reinterpretation: it is merely repristination. Still there are some new ways of putting things which must be looked at.

Aulén even has a good word to say for the theory in its mythological form of a ransom paid to the devil. This is the place where we really have some reinterpretation of the doctrine. It is pointed out that Luther, following St. Paul, added to the Powers from which Christ redeems us. The Greeks thought of sin, the devil, death, and corruption: but Luther thought also of the law and the wrath of God. This doctrine of Luther gives the starting-point for Aulén's reinterpretation. The powers that Christ overcomes are to be thought of as the ministers of the Divine justice. We are then to understand that in the death of Christ God both pays the ransom and receives it. The Atonement is to be interpreted as a working of God upon himself. Such an idea, however, is quite untenable, if it is to be taken as strict theology. To imagine a duality in God may make splendid poetry:

Mine eye poureth out tears unto God;  
That He would maintain the right of a man with God,  
And of a son of man with his neighbour.

Or again:

Thou permit'st, dread Lord, that we  
Take refuge from Thyself in Thee.

But we cannot accept a battle between the Divine Mercy and the Divine Justice as a serious account of the Atonement. A divided will in God there cannot be. The prodigal may take refuge from a frowning Providence and find a smiling Face; but in reality the Providence that frowns, and the Face that smiles, are actuated by one and the same love.

But let us pass on to the recapitulation theory, which is the more reflective form of the Greek doctrine of the Atonement. What does its new defender make of that? Can he dispel Anselm's charge that it amounts to nothing more than fanciful analogies, unless some solid basis be shown?

Aulén maintains that the Greek doctrine in this form possesses the advantage of both the Latin and the experiential doctrines without the disadvantages of either. The Latin doctrine is objective; but it follows a broken line. According to it, the purpose of Christ's life is to reveal God, the purpose of His death is to make satisfaction for sin. His death is given no direct saving bearing on mankind. On the other hand, the experiential doctrine gives it this direct bearing; but it is in Aulén's view merely subjective. What is wanted, he says, is a doctrine which is objective, and which at the same time interprets both the life and death of Christ from a single principle, as directly operative of human salvation. This want is



supplied by the Greek doctrine, which exhibits the righteousness and life of Christ as a leaven in humanity counteracting sin and death.

What is to be said of this defence of the Greek doctrine? It is undoubtedly based on a true understanding of that doctrine, particularly as it appears in Irenaeus; but does it really achieve anything? Not unless we carry it on to a point which is far beyond anything intended, and find the real substance of the Atonement in the experiential doctrine.

To think of Christ's work as a leaven in humanity is to think in images, which require theological justification if they are to correspond to the truth. Humanity is but an abstract name for all those human individuals Christ came to save, each of whom is a moral personality. The influence of Christ upon men, as it spreads through the world, is like leaven in the way that it penetrates and permeates society; but it works always by moral suasion upon individuals, saving men one by one. It is like Ezekiel's river of the water of life, concerning which it is said, 'Everything shall live whithersoever the river cometh'; yet that text can only be applied, if we remember that the spiritual river only flows where the heart opens to receive it. To speak of the work of Christ in humanity is just a way of speaking broadly of His work upon individual men. No doubt that is not what the Greeks meant. They brought into theology the notion of the Reality of Universals, to the effect that there is such a thing as human nature independent of the existence of individual

men, which nature can be affected quite apart from all moral processes in individuals. They maintained a doctrine of the Incarnation, according to which the pre-existent Logos united His Divinity in His own Person, not to an individual man, but to human nature, or humanity in general. Hence all His acts affect humanity as a whole. Christ saved human nature in His own Person, prior to all influences exerted by Him upon others. Concerning this conception William of Ockham pointedly asks: How then can human nature be saved in Peter and damned in Judas?

But it may be said, is not this conception, nevertheless, Pauline? Is it not said: In Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive? The difference is that Greek theology makes into a substantial theory what in Paul is impassioned rhetoric. We have perpetually to keep in mind Baur's illuminating remark about the want of mediating ideas in St. Paul. The Pauline phrase just quoted represents a great Christian intuition which overleaps all theological mediation: it can be filled out wrongly or rightly. It has been pointed out already how unsatisfactory the Greek interpretation of St. Paul really was, in spite of its apparent close following of his words: it implied a salvation of 'humanity' which saved no one in particular, but left each individual in the end to save himself by his own merits.

What is necessary is to understand the real meaning of the Pauline mysticism, as it is called. It is an identification of Christ and the Christian, whether by faith or in the

sacrament, which is one of ecstatic feeling such that the whole religious and moral process, by which the identification becomes possible, is for the moment forgotten, though it is inevitably implied. There can be no better illustration of this than the great words:

‘I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me.’

In the first words the identification with Christ is complete, the rapt ecstatic is one with his Lord: in the later words the difference emerges, and the moral character of salvation is recognized.

When therefore Christ’s saving acts are spoken of as ‘cosmic acts’, as is not uncommon at the present time, we can welcome the phrase as glorifying their universal scope, provided only that we supply mentally the qualification that they work religiously and morally. Otherwise we are in danger of supposing that Christ’s acts have an effect that is not psychologically mediated; and this is to come down to the level of ethnic religion and sympathetic magic. The Greek doctrine of the Atonement is never very far away from that level: it is only redeemed from it by the fact that it ends in a legalism, which brings in by the back door, not indeed very satisfactorily, the moral individual who has been turned out at the front door.

An act has consequences; and we rightly look at the act in the light of its consequences, and consider it as pregnant with them. But we must be prepared always

to analyse and explain the working of the act. The fallacy is to abstract from the causal process, and read the whole result into the act that begins it.

Caesar crossed the Rubicon: that was the end of an era and the beginning of another. But separate the act from its consequences, and the act is no more than any other crossing of a brook. It is not the act itself, but the motive from which it proceeds, and the process it sets in motion, that matter.

So with Christ's death. In itself it was an isolated event. Jesus died; as millions have died before Him and millions have died after Him. What is it that lifts this particular event into so supreme a significance? It is the principle of love from which He died, and the power of love that moves from His death upon the world.

In the end, then, we must regard the Greek doctrine of the Atonement as an external view of an experiential process, which requires to be understood from within, if the external view of it is not to mislead. There is an enormous difference always between the view of any experience from without and the entering into it from within. The spectator watches the countless activities of men hard at work: it makes a picture of life in perpetual movement, which is full of interest. But how different is the experience of the men who work! For them there is no lively spectacle, but toil of thews and sinews, labour and exhaustion. That is just the difference between aesthetic contemplation and experience. It is the same difference that exists between the Greek theory of the Atonement

and the experiential view. Aulén is so far right: both show the direct saving effect of Christ upon men. But one regards it from without, the other from within. Just as it is one thing to watch men labouring and another ourselves to labour; so it is one thing to contemplate Christ's triumph in history, and quite another to experience the Divine forgiveness. Aesthetic contemplation is not enough. Apart from personal experience, it is mere witchery that tempts us back to sub-Christian levels of thought.

The Latin theory of satisfaction and merit has been found unsatisfactory, alike in its original medieval form and in its orthodox Protestant and Grotian forms. But it was recognized that it had deep roots in the language of Scripture: it has entered deeply also into the liturgical devotion and the hymnology of the Western Church. What is to be said of this time-honoured theory? Is it to be reinterpreted, or repudiated? Nothing awakens more feeling than the clash of opinions here. To many conservatively minded Christians the doctrine of the Atonement in the sense of expiation, propitiation, or satisfaction, taken very literally, is the article of a standing or a falling Church; while other Christians with liberal tendencies can hardly bear the mention of these things, and while perhaps they do not venture to criticize the New Testament, at least they cannot do with the hymns that are so saturated with them. Some even go so far as to reject the whole Pauline element in the New Testament, and accept only the teaching of Jesus; though, if there is any tradition of Him that is well guaranteed, it is the tradition of the

Last Supper, which alone is enough to keep alive the idea of sacrifice.

What, then, is to be said of this great type of doctrine, to some a rock of refuge, to others a stone of stumbling?

Various modern attempts to spiritualize the doctrine fail, because they do not really abandon the indefensible point, which is that God *demand*s vicarious suffering of some sort from Christ, before He can rightly forgive sin. When McLeod Campbell teaches that Christ made a vicarious confession of sin on behalf of humanity, we can only say that the conception violates the fundamental principles of moral personality. A confession of sin on behalf of others has something unreal in it. The solidarity of Christ with the rest of men would naturally lead to a sympathetic understanding of their alienation from God; but it could not involve Jesus in a feeling of guilt, since guilt is always individual and personal: *mea culpa*. The vicarious penitence which Moberly substitutes for McLeod Campbell's vicarious confession of sin, is no improvement on Campbell's theory. If Jesus could not acknowledge a guilt that was not His own, still less could He feel penitence because of it. These modern doctrines are still based on the notion of making sin forgivable, which abstracts from the personality of the sinner, and so misses the true problem which is to make the sinner forgivable.

The criticism just passed upon McLeod Campbell and Moberly is not to be turned by an appeal to the Old Testament conception of corporate personality, and St. Paul's transference of it to Adam and Christ. That trans-

ference can only be theologically defended under proper safeguards, which show how it must be limited, when it is interpreted from the general standpoint of New Testament religion.

The notion of corporate personality is a survival from primitive thought and feeling, before the notion of moral individuality became clearly defined. It is the idea that sinks the individual in the whole of the clan or tribe, so that he has no independent personality of his own. Now, it is true that a family, a tribe, or a nation in some ways resembles an organism. The suffering of one member involves that of others: the individual is affected by the ruin of the whole. But the distinction of this solidarity in suffering from the question of moral guilt becomes clear, when ethical development has gone far enough. A similar evolution takes place in the conception of punishment. It might seem satisfactory to primitive ideas that a whole family should be punished for Achan's offence; but modern feeling would regard such an action as a travesty of justice. The guilty individual, and only the guilty individual, must be punished for his offences. It will hardly be quoted in support of the notion of corporate personality, that in time of war a whole village has been destroyed because of the offences of particular individuals: war is in itself a return to savagery and savage standards. To sum up, the principle of solidarity must not be pressed to the point where it infringes the more fundamental principle of moral individuality. Just as the solidarity of men in sin must not be urged so as to deny

their individual responsibility, so neither must the solidarity of Christ with sinners be pressed so as to involve Him in their guilt, whether externally and legally, or inwardly and by spiritual sympathy.

We have to say, then, as Dr. Dale indeed also says, that the descriptions of the death of Christ in the New Testament as a sacrifice and a propitiation are illustrations and nothing more. They suggest certain aspects of the Atonement, on which the imagination fitly dwells in the attempt to bring home to the feeling all that Christ has done. It is no use trying to work the different points of analogy into a consecutive theory; as is done in the doctrine of satisfaction and merit. The analogies are from different sides, and are independent of one another.

We have to remember that ritual sacrifice was central in all religion, Jewish and pagan, up to the time of Christ. Thus though the Epistle to the Hebrews comments on the startling termination of the Jewish sacrificial system by Christianity; what so natural as that the new religion should express itself in terms of the old? It can still do so, and can utilize all that resonance of primitive feeling which the mention of sacrifice awakes; if only we limit the use of the idea to the real analogies and avoid the temptation to bring the new down to the level of the old.

There is an obvious analogy between ritual sacrifice and the vicarious suffering that we have recognized as so deeply involved in the work of Christ. There are indeed important differences. In the one case, suffering was imposed upon an involuntary victim, that the requirements



of ritual might be fulfilled, however variously these were interpreted; whether as the provision of the means of the communion meal, or as a propitiatory gift, or even as a substitutionary endurance of the Divine wrath. In the other case, Christ's voluntary pursuit of His mission of love among men led to His suffering and death at their hands. But in spite of all differences, the external similarity is plain; and it is enhanced by the fact that in both cases the intended issue of the inwardly so diverse undertakings is the bringing of men to God, the removal of guilt, the establishment of communion between God and men. The use of the sacrificial metaphors is to lead us to meditate on how much Jesus suffered, that He might bring us to God; and so to quicken still farther responsive love in us.

Another aspect of the work of Christ which the sacrificial figures bring out, is that the suffering of Christ was brought about by human sin; just as it is the means of bringing us out of our sins. Christ suffered the effects and results of man's sin, so far as an innocent person could do. The cry of desolation upon the Cross has been rightly regarded as marking the climax of His suffering. His physical and spiritual sufferings were like a thick cloud, that blotted out the sense of God's nearness in that dark hour. But it is altogether wrong to think of Jesus as thus alienated from God: in truth He was never nearer to the Father than in the moment of desolation. Actually, His faith triumphs over His sense of loneliness: in that dread moment He still says, 'My God': God is still His

God. The night is very dark, but the dawn is at hand: presently He will cry, 'Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit.' Not as a penalty did Jesus undergo the suffering of the Cross: it was rather as the shepherd endures hardship, exposure, danger, and even death for the sheep. The sheep enjoy their safety because of what the shepherd has endured.

There are yet other points of resemblance between the death of Christ on the Cross and the ancient sacrifices, Jewish and even heathen. The primitive notion of the potency of blood as a cleansing medium, and the quite different idea of the establishment of a common life between man and God by the eating of the sacrifice, are both of them applied in the New Testament as analogies of the way in which the Atonement purifies man from sin and brings him into fellowship with God. The very diversity of such ideas shows how utterly unsuited they are for use in a consolidated theory.

But there is just one more analogy which must be mentioned; as it touches a point of the greatest moment in the contemplation of the Atonement. It derives from the notion of the sacrifice as a gift to the Deity, which some scholars think its most primitive significance. Jesus is regarded as offering up Himself to God: the emphasis is here on the voluntary character of His endurance of the Cross. 'Then said I, Lo, I am come, to do Thy will, O God.' This is probably the point where the idea of sacrifice lends itself most easily to dogmatic use; provided only that we keep to the single meaning and do not allow it to

be entangled with other quite different analogies. We can say, using the word sacrifice in a modern and Christian sense, that the sacrifice offered by Jesus was that He gave Himself up to the Father to be the personal instrument of His love for men, making through His death the final revelation that alone could convince the impenitent sinner of the love of God. As St. Bernard of Clairvaux so finely expresses it:

Non mors placuit, sed voluntas sponte morientis.

There is a splendid passage which goes to the very heart of the matter, in a place where perhaps we might not be likely to look for it. Duns Scotus, too often thought of only as a purveyor of subtleties, has these words:

‘We must believe that this Man suffered for righteousness’ sake. For He saw the iniquities committed by the Jews . . . Christ therefore wishing to recall them all from that error by works and words, preferred to die rather than to maintain silence, and accordingly He died for righteousness’ sake. In truth, however, His Passion was a sacrifice which He ordained and offered to the Father for us, and therefore we are much beholden to Him.’<sup>1</sup>

To go on in the work of truth and love, to foresee the Passion, accept it, and freely offer it as a sacrifice to the Father: nothing could more rightly describe the Atonement, if only we remember that the gift offered by Our Lord was not the acceptance of a penalty, but was the performance to the very end, in spite of death itself, of

<sup>1</sup> *Op. Oxon.* in Sent. iii, Dist. xx. 10.

the great purpose of His life, which was to reveal the Father's love to men, even in their sins.

It is sometimes objected that to use the word sacrifice in this way is an unjustifiable modernization of its meaning. We speak popularly, it is said, of the sacrifice made by a doctor or nurse who, in order to bring help where it is most needed, voluntarily faces, and even meets with death. We praise the nobility of such a sacrifice, and honour those who make it. It is argued, however, that in the theological use of the word, we must put all such modern meanings out of our minds: we must go back to the original intention of sacrifice in the Old Testament or elsewhere, so far as we can determine it, and carefully apply this to fix the meaning of sacrifice, not merely in the New Testament, but in Christian theology. The exact opposite of this contention is true. Instead of perpetually bringing back the thought of the New Testament to Old Testament or even ethnic levels, we should always pay attention to the new motives which press through the language of antiquity, where it is made use of in the New Testament, deflecting the real and underlying meaning into quite different channels. The business of the systematic theologian is to work out this underlying meaning from the hints and suggestions which are visible everywhere to the attentive eye. If in so doing, he comes to use old words in new senses, that is just because the whole development itself demands it. Thus we may say that the modern notion of sacrifice, so often decried and belittled by conservative theologians, is indeed the true Christian

idea of sacrifice, conveying its spiritual essence, the meaning towards which Christ Himself brings us, not merely by His words, but still more by the substance of His acts. In this sense we may fitly apply the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews: 'He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.'

All the modern study of ancient sacrifice which has been carried on in such detail from Robertson Smith to Buchanan Gray is of great value, not merely to enable us to perceive the manifoldness of the analogies between ancient ritual and different aspects of the Atonement, but still more to show how absolutely the sacrifice of Christ transcends all older sacrifices, not only in measure, as the older theologians thought, but also in its very principle. When we say that Christ offered Himself to the Father to be the personal instrument and power of His love towards men, we raise the idea of sacrifice to the Christian level. Instead of attempting to interpret the Atonement through ancient ideas of sacrifice, we reinterpret the idea of sacrifice through it: we baptize it into Christ, and so perfect the meaning of the word.

Anselm says at the end of the *Cur Deus Homo*, that his doctrine solves almost every question in the Old or New Testament. The three greatest questions in Christianity are the question of God, the question of Christ, and the question of the Atonement. These lectures have been on the Atonement; but the course that has been pursued in them has dealt to a considerable extent with the doctrine of God. What is the bearing of the experiential theory

of the Atonement, which has been defended, upon the Christological question? Schleiermacher laid down the proposition that the doctrines of Christ's Person and Work are correlative: a doctrine of the Atonement implies a Christology and vice versa. That is true up to a point; but an implicit Christology is a very different thing from a developed Christology, and to develop the Christology that should accompany the foregoing doctrine of the Atonement would require another course of lectures quite as long as this. But some things must be said towards such a Christology. The fundamental principle of our doctrine of the Atonement has been the revelation of God in a human personality. That, in spite of the insistence of the eschatological school upon the transcendence of the Messiah, is a satisfactory interpretation of the fundamental New Testament doctrine of the Messiahship of Jesus in terms of modern thought. If Christianity is the religion, not of the sheer supernatural, but of the ethical supernatural, then Jesus is the Representative of God and the Viceregent of God in His Kingdom, because His human personality is the power of the love of God among men.

But there is no doubt that the experiential doctrine of the Atonement means the abandonment of the Greek Christology with its doctrine of an impersonal human nature, in favour of what is always the underlying tendency of Latin theology, to recognize a real and complete human personality in Him. Brunner actually argues that Jesus cannot have a human personality, because human

personality as such means sin.<sup>1</sup> The possibility and actuality of a sinless human personality in Jesus must be unflinchingly maintained.

It is from this point that Christology must be reconstructed at whatever cost; but this is not the place to do it. It can only be suggested that the way must be through a doctrine of the Trinity, which is firmly monotheistic. There must be maintained indeed the immanent distinction of the Persons, established by the eternal generation of the Logos and the eternal procession of the Spirit. But the tempting social analogy must be avoided, which interprets the Godhead as though it were a company of human individuals. All this, once more, will be in steady pursuance of the tendency of the best Latin theology.

Let me conclude my lectures by turning from all our important theological considerations to something more important still, which is their practical issue. Do they establish a gospel that can be preached? One of the charges that is brought perpetually against modern theology is that it has no effective gospel with which to replace the simple old gospel, that Jesus paid in full the price of sin, and turned away the wrath of God; so that all that we have to do is to trust in His finished work.

What is simple depends upon the presuppositions from which we start. To St. Bernard of Clairvaux it was the simple gospel that Jesus by His death had paid a price to the devil for his captives; and he was so horrified at Abelard's rejection of the doctrine, that he said that it

<sup>1</sup> *Der Mittler*, 1927, pp. 285-7.

proved that Abelard was still a captive of the devil. But to-day the abandonment of a dualistic scheme of things has made that old theory impossible. If Aulén thinks it can be renewed, it is because he thinks dualism can be restored also.

The position is really quite similar with regard to the doctrine of penal substitution. If one believes in a dualism of mercy and justice, in which mercy is always regulated by the requirements of justice, it will be easy to say:

In my place condemned He stood;  
Sealed my pardon with His blood.

But if an analogy with the state has ceased to guide our thinking about God, then the presuppositions for the older evangelism have disappeared. When we have learned to think of God as Absolute Love, the so-called simple gospel no longer appears simple. It seemed simple, because men were thinking in a rut; now we have escaped from the rut.

What is the real problem for the modern preacher setting forth a doctrine of the Atonement? It is to make people know and feel the love of God. The vision of a Kingdom of God sometimes seems no more than a will-o'-the-wisp floating over the quagmires of sin and suffering which compose the modern world. One of the worst features of alienation from God is the doubt, not merely of His goodness and grace, but even of His very presence among the hard realities amidst which we move. The prodigal in the far country spent all; he began to be in



want, and would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat. Our temptation continually amidst so much world-chaos, so much frustration of human life and purpose, is to think only of material causes and material needs.

The gospel of Christ's cross, rightly understood, is a gospel, not only for human sin, but also for human doubt. It is the gospel that supplements the parable of the prodigal with the parable of the Good Shepherd. What the Cross says to us, is that even in the darkest days and hours God is at hand. He is near, where human cruelty and human stupidity do their worst.

The love of God in Christ is a power that transcends the sphere of the respectable and the comfortable. It is not limited to garden cities, or house-parties, or conferences of earnest and well-meaning people. The Cross is interpreted by Jesus Himself when He says: 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.'

The very worst state of sin is the hard and impenitent heart that is miserable, but has ceased to hope or expect anything from God. It is the heart that seems almost to have lost all capacity for God, or for moral regeneration. It is the state of mind that made a great but despairing prophet to cry:

'The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart and upon the horns of their altars.'

'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'

The older doctrine of the Atonement had a message for the awakened sinner, guilty, trembling, doubting, fearing. But it had no message for the man really *dead* in trespasses and sins. The older gospel was for those on whom the law had done its work, who were convinced of sin, and were asking for salvation.

But the problem to-day is far deeper. It is with the man who feels no particular sense of sin at all, who is just miserable and wretched, affected with a restless *malaise*, which he has caught from the world-situation. What are we to say to him? He is like the boy in Hans Andersen's beautiful fairy tale, who could see nothing aright because of a magic splinter in his eye, till a devoted sister sought the bewitched brother in the halls of the Snow Queen: then he wept tears of gratitude, and the magic splinter was washed away.

Our gospel speaks of a love that sought men, and still seeks them, just where they are and as they are: it is the love of Jesus, which is the love of God, and which finally pursued the hard and impenitent heart of man to the hill of Calvary. There it is that God says to us:

A broken heart, a fount of tears,  
Ask, and they will not be denied.

There it is that the miracle takes place: the hardest thing in the world, the hard and impenitent heart of man, is softened and melted. Deep calls unto deep. Love answers love; and the Atonement is accomplished.

How can we bring home this gospel to our time? Not

by always preaching the Atonement; we have to preach on all manner of things; just as St. Paul, for all that he determined to know nothing but Christ and Him crucified, wrote in his Epistles on Christian ethics, Church order and discipline, and all the innumerable practical issues of Christianity in his day. The preaching of the Atonement does not mean that every sermon is to contain the experiential doctrine of the Atonement, as in former days it was thought that every sermon should contain what was called the plan of salvation in some part of it. We have to preach in the *spirit* of the Atonement; so that the Cross not only shines by its own light, but illuminates everything else. Above all we have to live in the spirit of the Atonement. Whatever be the case with other doctrines of the Atonement, the gospel of the love of God in Christ can only be preached effectively by those who prove the truth of their preaching by exhibiting the power of that love in their own lives. It is the practical issue of the gospel of the Atonement, that, kindled by the power of the Divine Love, we should by that same power kindle others.



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